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The Manaki Brothers. The Chroniclers of the “Third” Europe

Abstract:

At the time of the birth of cinema at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, one more area was created on the cultural map of Europe, next to the West and the East. In the heart of this “third” Europe, under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, worked famous photographers of Wallachian origin, Janaki and Milton Manaki, their film work made them famous in the early 20th century as pioneers of “Balkan cinema”. Most of the films that have survived to this day were made in the Ottoman period. They are a testimony of everyday life as well as important events that influenced the course of the history of the region. The study of the life and work of the Manaki brothers seems to be dominated by the least important aspect, that is, the question of their origin and nationality. Their films are included in many national cinema discourses in the Balkans, from North Macedonia, through Greece, Romania, to Albania and Turkey. This article, representing a synthesis of brighter research, is, on the one hand, an attempt to organize (objective) knowledge about the lives and works of the Manaki brothers, and on the other hand, an in-depth introduction to their film work.

Key words:

Manaki Brothers, Early Cinema, European Cinema, Documentary Film

During the birth of cinema at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, one more area existed on the cultural map of Europe, apart from the West and the East – the “third”, “Turkish” – *La Turquie d'Europe* (Boué, 1840), Europe under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. This multi-ethnic, multi-religious geographic region, called the Balkans by the West, with dynamic borders that change depending on the political situation, in its turbulent history has constantly struggled with colonization, conflicts, integration and disintegration of various powers, kingdoms, countries or nations fighting for independent states. The birth of cinematography and its rapid development coincided with the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) in this territory, and more precisely at its end, which was a turbulent time in the region due to rebellions, uprisings, coups d'état, revolutions of nations supported by European powers, as well as internal tensions (the Young Turk movement eventually deprived him of the throne).

In the heart of this “third” Europe, the famous photographers of the region, Yanaki¹ (1878–1954) and Milton² (1882–1964) Manaki³ (he was the actual filmmaker of the two brothers), Vlachs (Pindeans Aromanians)⁴ by origin, had been working since 1898. They are the main characters of this article as the documentary filmmakers, and among others chronicled the emancipation of the region from the Ottoman Empire. The work of the Manaki brothers could be divided into five periods: Ottoman (1898-1912), Wartime (Balkan Wars and World War I, 1912-1918), Interwar period (1919-1941), World War II and Yugoslavia (until Milton's death in 1964), and the photographic work of Yanaki from Plovdiv (1916-1919) and Thessaloniki (1934-1954) should also be considered. Most of the films that have survived to this day were made during the Ottoman period. They are a testimony of everyday life, as well as important events that influenced the course of the history of the region.

In 1955, Milton Manaki handed over to the Cinematheque of Yugoslavia (*Jugoslovenska kinoteka*) a collection of black and white silent films recorded

¹ In various sources it appears as Janaki, Jakim, Ienache, Ianachia, Giannakis, Ioannis, Giannis, Giannakias, Ion, Ionel, Ianakis, Ianaki, Iovan, Yannakis, Iannaki, Janaq.

² In various sources it appears as Miltos, Miltiade, Miltiadis, Miltiadi, Miltiades, Meltis, Miltiadhi.

³ In various sources it appears as Manaka, Manakas, Manakias, Manachia, Manaqi. They wrote their names as Milton i Ienache Manakia.

⁴ Wallachians, Armani, Meglenites, Kurcovlasi, Vlasi, Cincari – an ethnic group, mostly Orthodox Christians, with their own Eastern Romance language, inhabiting the Balkan Peninsula, especially Greece, Romania, North Macedonia (Minov, 2021), Bulgaria, Albania and Serbia. In this region the Vlachs were mostly transhumant shepherds, but they also had their own intellectual elites. At the end of the Ottoman Empire, in the heyday of the intense pressure of national affiliation decisions, the Vlachs from the region were nationally indoctrinated, nationalized by Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia or Romania, and as a result often (especially through language, but not only) assimilated.

on flammable 35-millimetre film. After numerous perturbations related to the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, these tapes were transferred to the Cinematheque of Macedonia, where in 1995-1996 they were copied onto acetate-based film tape, and in 2012 the impressive output was digitized and restored.⁵ As a result, 42 documentaries were released on DVDs, divided into 5 groups: 1. *First films* (Првите филмови), 2. *Folk customs and religious rituals* (Народни обичаи и верски обреди), 3. *Revolution of the young Turks/ Hürriyet* (Револуцијата на младите Турци/ Хуриет) 4. *Important historical events and figures* (Важни настани и историски личности) 5. *In Bitola after World War I* (Во Битола по Првата светска војна). These films made the Manaki brothers famous as pioneers of “Balkan Cinema” (Εξάρχος, 1991; Tutui, 1), “The Homers of Balkan Film”⁶, “The Balkan Lumière Brothers” (Xoxha, 1994) or “The Ottoman Lumière Brothers” (Şentürk, 2020) and at the same time they have become part of the early film history of many national cinemas from the region.

This article aims not only to present in detail the film work of the Manaki brothers of the Ottoman period, but also to bring complexity of the broader turbulent geopolitical context and changes in the region where they lived and worked closer, and how, since their death, numerous countries have included their work into their own history and cultural heritage (film).

Photographers of the “third” Europe

The Manaki brothers were born in the village of Avdella (today Greece) then part of the Manastir vilayet of the Ottoman Empire. Yanaki continued his education in Manastir (today Bitola, North Macedonia) in a Romanian high school. In 1898, engaged by his father’s friend, Apostol Mărgărit⁷ (serving as Inspector General of Romanian schools in the territory of the Ottoman Empire), he began working as a teacher of calligraphy and painting at a Romanian high school in Ioannina (today Greece), where a few months earlier he had opened a commercial photographic studio, where Milton began a permanent job as his brother’s assistant. On request, they took various types of photographs, including portraits

⁵ Both projects were financially supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia and UNESCO.

⁶ See the film *The Homers of Balkan Film – the Manakia Brothers* (*Homērēt e filmit ballkanik – vëllezërit Manaqi*), 2011, dir. Petrit Ruka.

⁷ Apostol Mărgărit, (1832-1903) was one of the most important promoters of the so called Aromanian-Romanian national movement in the Ottoman Empire, in order to nationalize the population (Christian, Vlachs) from the Macedonian region through schooling, propaganda and endorsing national church hierarchies. Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia have the same external nationalizing politics as in Ottoman Macedonia. (Creţulescu, 2015, p. 105.) Margarit was the secretary of the Grand Vizier in Istanbul and, according to Marian Țuțui, it is very likely that he enabled the Manaki brothers to meet the Imperial high society. (Цунун, 1997, p.33)

(also of important personalities), family photos, group portraits of social groups, photos of various state officials, photos of clergy (monks, priests, metropolitans) or portraits of politicians and military men. Not only did they work in the studio, but they also travelled to villages and towns in the region to photograph local events, sports matches, celebrations, christenings, weddings, and funerals, as well as events of various clubs and associations and political events. This was a real feat, given the conditions of travel and the uncertainty of the times that forced other photographers to work in the studio.

In addition to providing commercial photographic services, the brothers also devoted themselves to the passion of photographing scenes from everyday life, local holidays, or customs specific to the visited places. Contrary to the dominant trend of pictorial photography at that time, popular in the artistic circles of the Belle Epoque, the brothers were interested in “pure photography” and faithfully documenting social reality, which makes their photos of great historical, ethnographic, anthropological, sociological and cultural value. Their impressive photographic output⁸, held by the Archives of the City of Bitola, includes 18,513 negatives (including 7,715 glass negatives, 2,087 board plates and 8,711 roll plates) and 17,854 photographs (including 10,952 originals and 6,902 photographs taken in the laboratory of the Bitola Archive from glass negatives and film frames) (СТАРАЦЕЛОВ, 2003b, p.70). During their career, the Manaki brothers were the official photographers of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire Mehmed V Reşad (1911), the Kings of Romania, Charles I Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (1906) and Alexander I Karađorđević of Serbia (1929).

Macedonia for Macedonians!

The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in what is now North Macedonia was a time of political turbulence and unrest. Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania fought for the area of Macedonia, with the support of individual European powers. In October 1893, Slavic activists in Thessaloniki, strongly influenced by the ideas of early socialism and anarchism, founded the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO, Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Committee), which aimed to liberate the Christian population, and saw the future of autonomous Macedonia as a multinational state – the term “Macedonian” (and “Adrianopolitan”) was a term of a supranational nature (in

⁸ The full-length (70 min) documentary *Manaki – A Story in Photographs* (Манаки – Приказна во слики, 2017/18, dir. Robert Jankuloski) shows the photographic work of the Manaki brothers. Every fact and opinion presented in the film has been thoroughly researched and confirmed by the presented artifacts. The story is told through original documentary photographs that show their work from the opening of the first professional studio in Ioannina.

the spirit of the idea of a Balkan federation), which included Bulgarians, Turks, Greeks, Vlachs, Albanians, Serbs and Jews living in this area (Bechev, 2009, p. iviii). In 1897, after the Bulgarian-Turkish war, which ended with Turkey's victory, the Macedonian revolutionary liberation movement strengthened and transformed from a group of idealistic revolutionaries into a militant partisan group of members of the Slavic-speaking military Komitaji (*Комитати*), operating under the slogan "Macedonia for Macedonians!".

It was emphasized that Christian ethnic groups were to work together to throw off the oppressive Ottoman yoke and lead to the creation of an autonomous Macedonia. Already at the end of the 19th century, the younger brother Milton Manaki sympathized with liberation movements and actively supported the activities of IMRO, for which he transported weapons and became a member in 1900 (Peterlić, 1990, p. 92). In 1904 he was imprisoned for six months by the Turkish authorities in Ioannina because of suspicions of collaboration with the IMRO insurgents (Илинденски сведоштва, 2017, p. 115-116). Over the years, he photographed various Macedonian liberation militias and documented the famous anti-Ottoman Ilinden–Preobrazhenie Uprising, which began on August 2, 1903, on St. Elijah's Day (Ilinden) in Manastir Vilayet, which lasted until the end of October and covered a vast area from the eastern coast of the Balkan Peninsula through the Black Sea to the shores of Lake Ohrid. After its brutal suppression by the Turks, Ottoman repression intensified.

The fighting against the Turks and the Ilinden–Preobrazhenie Uprising attracted worldwide attention, and the dramatic events became international media coverage. The European powers were especially concerned because of their own interests in the area. In 1903, the Charles Urban Trading Company sent Charles Rider Noble (1854-1914) with a movie camera to Bulgaria, where in 1903-1904 he shot (Kardjilov, 2012), among other things, four films featuring Macedonian refugees and four films that he probably shot in Turkish Macedonia without the

Ljubljana, Latermanov drevored.

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Ker se slike na večjo razdaljo vidijo lepše, zatoorej so boljše, namred prvi prostori nameščeni zadaj.

943 **Karel F. Lifka.**

consent of the Ottoman authorities⁹ (Kosanović, 1985, p. 251-256). In the same year, Lucien Nonguet recorded a feature film in the style of a newsreel, *Massacres de Macédonie* (1903), at the Pathé studio, presenting the reconstruction and staging of the massacre committed by Turkish soldiers on Macedonians during the Ilinden–Preobrazhenie Uprising. It was intended to arouse the interest of the European public in the suffering and heroism of the Macedonians, and it was shown all over Europe.¹⁰

“Macedonianness” has been defined differently by the leaders of political organizations associated with the governments of different countries. Growing unrest among the population of Macedonia at that time mobilized states interested in taking over this territory to send paramilitary troops to be able to react in the event of a successful uprising and start annexation. After the Ilinden–Preobrazhenie Uprising, in 1904, the Greeks founded the Greek Macedonian Committee (*Ελληνομακεδονικό Κομιτάτο*), a revolutionary organization whose aim was to liberate Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire in the vilayets of Manastir and Thessaloniki. Its partisan militias in Macedonia *Makedonomáchoi* (*Μακεδονομάχοι*), also called *Andartes*, directed their actions not so much against the Turks (it was believed that their departure from the Balkans was only a matter of time) but against the Vlachs (supported by Romania) and, above all, the Bulgarians, whose intention was also the seizure of this territory after Turkey’s withdrawal. (Stathatos, 2015, p. 34). The Serbs, recognizing the Macedonian lands as part of “Greater Serbia”, initially, like others, limited themselves mainly to propaganda through schools and consulates. In 1902, the first militias were organized to fight in Macedonia. The first Serbian company, sent to Macedonia in 1904, was lost.

In 1905, the Manaki brothers’ home village, Avdella, was burnt to the ground by Greek *Antartes* in retaliation for the pro-Romanian attitude of Wallachian inhabitants. In the same year, after Yanaki’s participation (on the Romanian side) in riots between pro-Romanian and Hellenophile Vlachs in the village of Vouvousa, he was arrested and expelled from Ioannina. The Manakis left Ioannina and moved to the multicultural city of Manastir (Bitola), which boasted a reputation as an important political, diplomatic, economic, and cultural centre in the Balkans. Manastir (the centre of Monastir Vilayet in 1874-1912) was a key strategic point for the Ottoman Empire on the border with Europe, as well as the home to the consulates, the seat of the Turkish pasha and the Greek metropolitan of Pelagonia. (Gorgi Dimovski – Colev, 2007, p. 10). The city was an administrative, cultural, educational,

⁹ Nr. 1154: *Refugees at Rilo Monastery*, Nr. 1155: *The Feast of St. John at Rilo Monastery*, Nr. 1156: *Refugees at Samokove*, Nr. 1232: *The National Dance of Macedonia and Bulgaria*

¹⁰ Nr. 1228: *An Insurgent Band in Cover*, Nr. 1229: *A Macedonian Insurgent Band on the March (Under the leadership of Ivantcho Quevgueliisky)*, Nr. 1233: *Initiating a New Member into an Insurgent Band, The Macedonian Insurgent fighting with Turks*.

spiritual, and commercial centre where the influences of the Orient and the Occidental mixed. After building an atelier in Manastir in 1905, the Manaki brothers open the Studio of Artistic Photography (*Ателје за уметничка фотографија*). Soon a new chapter in their work will begin – documenting with a film camera *Bioscope 300* (*Charles Urban Trading Company*), which is kept by the archives of the city of Bitola in North Macedonia. Contradictions appearing among researchers on the film work of the Manaki brothers concern, among others, the question of when (1905, 1906, 1907) and where (Paris, London) Janaki purchased a film camera, and therefore, the date of the first recording.¹¹

First movies

The first films, dated in the period from (1905,1906) 1907 to 1911 are recordings illustrating the rural life and social work of Vlachs, from the registration of the aged grandmother of the brothers (*Grandma Despina, Баба Деспина*), weaving women in the backyard of Avdella (*Weaving Women, Домашна работа. Сновачки*),¹² women washing clothes in the river (*Washerwomen, Перачки*), through a break in the journey of Wallachian nomads (*Wallachian Nomads, Власи номади*), merchants selling fabrics, wool, leather, wood, reeds, hand-made products or meat at the market (*Market Day in Bitola, Пазар и касани*) or a fair (*The Mass, Панаѓур; Veria Fair, Панаѓур во Бео*), sheep farmers shearing, slaughtering and evisceration (*Sheep Slaughter, Бачило*), the mating of horses and cattle (*Veterinary Station, Ветеринарна станица; Turkish Teacher at the Agricultural School, Турски професор во земљоделско училиште*), to teaching children at an open-air Wallachian village school (*The Outside Class, Училиште на отворен*

¹¹ Screening of a film in Ljubljana in 1904 by the cinematographer Alexander Lifke. Slovenian film title: *Grozovitosti v Macedoniji*. Photo: „Slovenski narod”, 02.04.1904, <http://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-O242T4KM/c6e3468b-4eea-431f-be48-31afef01e1d5/PDF>.

¹² Researchers relied on Milton's words, including from an interview for Radio Skopje in 1963, that Janaki had attended a drawing course in Paris in 1905 and had bought a camera in London in the meantime, which he sent to his brother. The purchase of the camera in London during the Paris course is also confirmed in an interview with Igor Stardelov by Milton's long-time collaborator, Mihajlo Zera, who, however, claims that Janaki went to Paris and London after starting work in Bitola (*Старделов*, 2003a, p. 28). Stardelov, like the historian of early Yugoslav cinema Dejan Kosanović, and the film expert Marian Țuțui from the Romanian National Archives, analyzing the available documents, believes that 1905 is too early a date (*Старделов*, 2003b, p.56; Kosanović, 1985, p. 263; Kosanović, 2000, p. 135) to purchase this type of camera and that there is no clear evidence that Yanaki was in Paris in 1905. They assume that the camera was purchased only after participating in the Great World Exhibition at the beginning of 1906 in Bucharest, where they presented their photographs in the Macedonian pavilion and were awarded for their photographic work. During this stay, they were invited by the Romanian King Charles I and appointed official photographers of the royal family, and for his photographic achievements, Yanaki received a scholarship from Charles I for study visits to several capitals of Western Europe (including Paris and London) in the fall of 1906 and the winter of 1907. Based on this data, the researchers mentioned above conclude that the first recordings from Avdella must have been made in the spring or summer of 1907.

простор). Equally valuable are the recordings of folk dances performed by a Wallachian community of over a hundred (*Wallachian Dance*, *Влашко оро*), customs and rituals (*Village wedding*, *Селска свадба*) and religious holidays (*The Religious Holiday All Souls' Day*, *Верски празник Задушница*; *The Celebration of Saint George*, *Прослава на Ѓурѓовден*; *The Celebration of the Religious Festival Epiphany*, *Прослава на Водиси во Бер*). These films testify to the life and customs of the early 20th century and are valuable visual documents of ethnological studies of material, spiritual and social culture, especially of the Vlachs. For example, *Village wedding* presents in detail the process of the wedding ceremony, the descent of guests from the surrounding mountains, the bride's departure from the house, women carrying the dowry, the departure of the groom showered with rice by the matchmakers, the gathering of guests at the house, the passage to the market, the wedding reception – Wallachian dance, the groom's return to the house, the arrival of the bride on horseback or the greeting of the bride at the house.



Stills from the films: *Village Wedding*, *The Religious Holiday All Souls' Day* and *Wallachian Dance*.

Another series of films about the daily life of Bitola and Christmas is represented by the films *The Celebrations of St. Cyril and Methodius on the Main Street in Bitola* (*Прослава на Св. Кирил и Методиј*), *Fair near "Holy Sunday" Church in Bitola* (*Панаѓур пред црквата Св. Недела во Битола*), *A Funeral of a Metropolitan in Bitola* (*Погреб во Битола*) or post-World War I commissioned recordings *Opening of the City Café in Bitola* (*Отварање на градска кафеана во Битола*) and *A Wedding in Bitola* (*Свадба во Битола*). In *The Celebrations of St. Cyril and Methodius on the Main Street in Bitola*, the first of the two film sets is filled with a procession that crosses the main street, consisting of the clergy, festively dressed people from the surrounding towns, townspeople, representatives of schools and associations. Similarly, *A Funeral of a Metropolitan in Bitola*, consisting of a single set, is a recording of a procession in the main street. These processions, like

many other events that took place on the main street of Bitola, were recorded from the balcony of the Manakis' apartment. In the movie *Fair near "Holy Sunday" Church in Bitola* you can admire women and men in Bulgarian costumes dancing the circle dance (*oro*). The film starts with many shots of the church and people gathered in front of it from different perspectives. In the next plan we see many shots of women dancing in Bulgarian folk costumes, then men dancing separately, then the author returns to the women's dance. The changeability of plans and shots adds dynamism and diversity to *Fair near "Holy Sunday" Church in Bitola*, in which an uninvited "cheerful" bystander who pushed his way into the frame certainly disturbed the authors.



Stills from the film: *Fair near "Holy Sunday" Church in Bitola*

In the collection of works by the Manaki brothers presenting daily life in Bitola, there is a recording that is extremely interesting in terms of history and politics, showing the public gallows on a bridge on the Dragor river with the bodies of four men hanged by the Turks in five shots. They have cards hanging around their necks, most likely with a description of the crime for which they were convicted. The film without a specific date (made probably before the Young Turkish Revolution in 1908) is entitled *Reprisals by the Turkish Army against the Macedonian Population* (*Репресалии врз македонско население*). Shocking *Reprisals* seems to be a documentary record, a testimony to the political situation in this part of the Empire after the Ilinden–Preobrazhenie Uprising. In addition to the bodies of the victims, the recordings also captured everyday life of the city and the Turkish policemen, who seem to be unaware that they are being recorded, guarding the convicts. At that time, people in these countries did not know what a film camera was and thought it was a photographic camera (Kosanović, 1985, p. 266).

Chroniclers of historical events

The Manaki brothers witnessed many historical events that really changed the political and geopolitical face not only of the Balkan Peninsula, but also of Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. One of them was Freedom (*Hürriyet*) – gatherings and events as part of the Young Turkish Revolution of 1908 in Bitola. In June 1908, the 3rd Macedonian Army carried out a coup d'état under the command of the so-called modernization officers. One of them was Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk, born, and raised in Thessaloniki and educated in Bitola. The Committee of Unification and Progress (Young Turks) restored the Ottoman constitution (briefly in force from 1876 to 1878), proclaimed the equality of all nations in the empire and organized elections for a multi-ethnic and multi-religious parliament. The Young Turks' Proclamation of Freedom brought equal rights and freedoms to Ottoman citizens regardless of their religion.

After the proclamation of the constitutional monarchy in 1908, the “exceptional” moments of the revolution that contributed to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire were documented by the Manaki brothers in eight films:

1. *The Celebration on the Occasion of Young Turks' Revolution in Bitola* (*Манифестацији по повод младотурската револуција*, 1908),
2. *The Celebration on Hürriyet* (*Манифестацији по повод Хуриет*, 1908),
3. *Parade on the Occasion of the Hürriyet* (*Парад по повод Хуриет*, 1908),
4. *Turks' Hearing Speech on Hürriyet* (*Турци држат говор на Хуриет*, 1908),
5. *Infantry and Cavalcade on the Occasion of the Young Turks* (*Парада на турска пешадија и коњеница*, 1908), 6. *Parades of the Turkish Artillery in Bitola* (*Парада на турска артилерија*, 1908),
7. *The Celebration with Slogans in Greek* (*Манифестацију: на грчки написи*, 1908),
8. *The Defilee of Army Orchestra, Carriages and Horsemen* (*Манифестацију дерфилене на коции и коњаници*, 1908).

The recordings depicting events related to the struggle for freedom are of great importance and value for world history and for the history of the folk of the Balkan Peninsula, who lived under Ottoman rule until 1912-1913. Milton and Yanaki participated in the activities of the revolutionaries, photographing (including the Ilinden insurgents who came down from the mountains to join the Young Turks) and filming the heroes of the revolution.

The *Manifestations* show a great commotion, a full street, hundreds of men and boys, representatives of various environments, schools, associations, or clubs, dressed in national costumes or uniforms, civilians gathering and passing down the main street of Bitola. It is decorated with flags and an ornate ceremonial triumphal gate. In *The Celebration on the Occasion of the Hürriyet*, decorated carriages are driven, one of which is the “freedom carriage”, in which five girls dressed in white ride, with white wreaths on their heads, holding hands. On their sashes are written the slogans: Unity (*İttihat*), Brotherhood (*Uhuvvet*), Freedom (*Hürriyet*), Equality (*Müsavat*) and Justice (*Adalet*). The joyful crowd with banners and flags is accompanied by a brass band. A favourite place to record events on the main street is again from the Manakis’ balcony. The proclamation of Hürriyet – freedom for all nations – was celebrated especially solemnly in Bitola. The documentary *Turks’ Hearing Speech on Hürriyet* was compiled from three different shots: the speaker addressing the audience on the podium, the audience and the military parade, the continuation of which can be admired in the recordings *Infantry and Cavalcade on the Occasion of the Young Turks*, *Parades of the Turkish Artillery in Bitola* or *The Defilee of Army Orchestra, Carriages and Horsemen*.

1911 can be considered a breakthrough in the documentary films of the Manaki brothers. The brothers attempt to create newsreels, documenting part of the trip of the Romanian delegation to Bitola, Gopesh and Resen, the visit of Sultan Mehmed Reşad V in Thessaloniki and Bitola and the funeral of Metropolitan Emilianos of Gravena. These documents were probably intended for “distribution” or may have been made to order. An indication that this was the case may be a copy of the Romanian delegation’s travel film stored in the Romanian Film Archive under the title *A Trip to Turkish Macedonia (Excursie în Macedonia turcească, 1911)* with Romanian subtitles¹³, or the fact that the chronicle of the funeral of Metropolitan Emilianos contains inserts in Greek. The films listed above are already relatively well-thought-out recordings, both in terms of narrative and visual.

From 1 to 20 April 1911, documentarians accompanied the official Romanian delegation. 29 eminent personalities from Romania led by former Romanian minister prof. Dr. Constantin Istrate visited, at the invitation of Teodor Capidan, then headmaster of the Romanian high school in Bitola (Tutui, 1, p. 8), three towns: Bitola, Gopesh and Resen, to check the situation of Vlachs after

¹³ According to Marian Țuțui the Romanian Film Archive carries two films edited from Manaki’s films: *A Trip to Turkish Macedonia (Excursie în Macedonia turcească, 1911)* and *Scenes from the Life of the Vlachs in the Pindus (Scene din viața aromânilor din Pind, 1906/1907-1911)*, with film boards in Romanian, from which it can be inferred that they were intended for a Romanian audience (Tutui, 2017, p. 4).



Still from the film: *The Celebration on the Occasion of the Hürriyet*

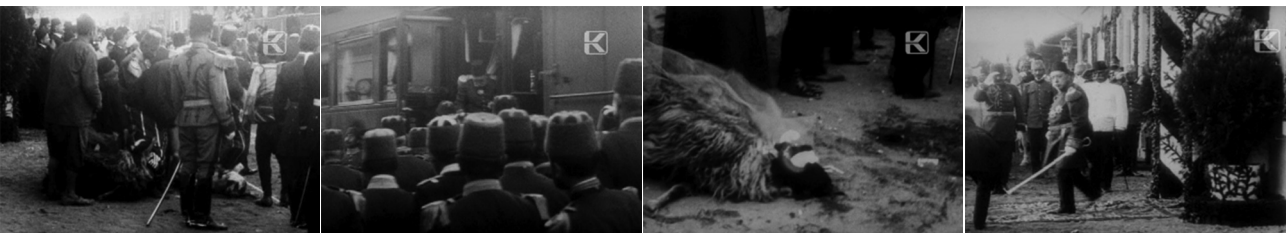
they had obtained rights thanks to Hürriyet. The films *The Romanian Minister Istrate visits Bitola* (Романска делегација во посета на Битола), *The Romanian Minister Istrate visits Gopesh* (Романска делегација во посета на Гопеш), and *The Romanian Minister Istrate visits Resen* (Романска делегација во посета на Ресен) form a thematic whole.

Another extremely valuable film “reportage” in two parts are the films documenting the visit of Sultan Mehmed V Reşad to Thessaloniki and Bitola under the title *The Visit of the Sultan Mehmed the Fifth Reşad to Thessaloniki* (Турскот Султан Мехмед V Реџад во посета на Солун, 1911) and *The Turkish Sultan Mehmed V Reşad visiting Bitola* (Турскот Султан Мехмед V Реџад во посета на Битола, 1911), recorded in June 1911. Milton, who had previously obtained permission to travel to Thessaloniki and accompany the Sultan as a photographer, also took a film camera with him. Mehmed Reşad V, the penultimate sultan of Turkey (1909-1918) ascended the throne because of the victory of the Young Turk Revolution. In 1911, just a year before the outbreak of the First Balkan War, he visited the places where the revolution had begun and where it had achieved

its first successes. The Albanian uprisings of 1910 and 1911 forced Mehmed V to make “goodwill” trips in the region (today Kosovo and North Macedonia) in May and June 1911 to awaken patriotism and solidarity among local nations and to counter nationalism.

In the film from the visit to Thessaloniki, Milton recorded the impressive panorama of the port of Salonica with the approaching ship of the Sultan *Barbaros Hayredin* (Tutui, 1, p. 9), beautifully decorated buildings on the promenade by the port, an orchestra preparing for the parade, soldiers, various social and ethnic groups, representatives of schools, associations, clubs lined up on the waterfront, awaiting the arrival and welcome of the Sultan. Then the Sultan, accompanied by his army, goes to his headquarters, greeted by crowds along the route. In the next part of the chronicle of the Sultan’s journey, Milton rides the train preceding the Sultan’s train from Thessaloniki to Bitola and documents the views through the window. During stops at the Florina and Suvichevo stations, the operator records a slowly departing train. It is a staged scene – passengers from the train are waving. Milton then records from the train again. At the train station in Bitola, the camera documents the arrival of the Sultan’s train, the ruler leaving the train and the crowds welcoming him. Here we have an interesting “parallel montage”, a combination of alternating shots showing the Qurban (sacrifice of a ram or a bock) at the station and the sultan, for whom the sacrifice is being made.

At the solemn parade in honour of the sultan, in the Manaki brothers’ document, one can admire many representations of various organizations (religious, military, political), military leaders, social and political associations, a parade of students, councillors, soldiers, viziers, school authorities, representatives of the Hürriyet, various nations and minorities and a brass band. Participants of the procession parade under the arcade and line up to greet the Sultan. It can be seen how heterogeneous Bitola and its vilayet were at the beginning of the 20th century in terms of nationality, how rich and diverse in social terms.



Stills from the film: *The Turkish Sultan Mehmed V Resad visiting Bitola*

In the same year, the Manaki brothers made the documentary film *The Funeral of the Metropolitan Emilianos of Silyvria* (*Ζακόν να Μετροπολιτοτ Εμιλιγιανος οδ Γρεβενα*, 1911), the only actually edited picture from their film output. On October 14, 1911, the Metropolitan of Grevena and his deacon Dimitrios Anagnostou were attacked while travelling between the villages and killed, and on October 24, 1911, their funeral was held, attended by the Manaki brothers as photographers and filmmakers. Film recordings of *The Funeral of the Metropolitan Emilianos of Silyvria* are combined with photographs, and the document itself is divided into seven parts using film boards: *Panorama of the City of Grevena* (Το πανόραμα τῆς πόλεως Γρεβενῶν), *The Portrait of Emilianos, Metropolitan of Grevena and Martyr* (Ὁ πορτορετὸ Μάρτυροσ Μητροπολιτοτ Γρεβενῶν Ἀμιλιανόσ), *The bodies of National Martyrs Emilianos and Deaconos* (Τα σώματα τῶν νομαρτύρων Ἀμιλιανόσ καὶ Διακόνου), *Church of St. Achilles in Grevena, where the Exposed Body of the National Martyr Emilianos rests* (Ὁ ναὸσ κκλησία τοσ γ(ιου)σ χιλλήουσ ν Γρεβενόσ, ποσ μνηεν κτε εμενον τὸ σμα τοσ νομάρτυροσ Ἀμιλιανόσ), *Homage of the People at the Body of the National Martyr Emilianos* (Τὸ προσκόνημα πὸ τοσ λαόσ πρὸ τοσ λειψάνουσ τοσ νομάρτυροσ Ἀμιλιανόσ), *Funeral of the Eternally Remembered Emilianos, Metropolitan of Grevena* (Ὁ κηδεία τοσ εμνηστοσ Μητροπολιτοτ Γρεβενῶν Ἀμιλιανόσ), and *Placing the Deceased in the Grave* (Ὁ φαίρησησ τῆσ μήτροσ καί καταβίβασην τοσ νεκροσ εἰς τὸ μνημα).

The first four parts of the film are a kind of introduction to the funeral. The chronicle opens with a 360-degree panoramic shot of Grevena, then we see a photo of the Metropolitan and a photo of the bodies of the “national martyrs”. A shot lasting a few seconds presents the church of St. Achilles, followed by a photograph of the body of Emilianos of Grevena on display in the temple. In the next (main) part of the chronicle, you can see how the clergy and people gather, the bodies are carried out of the church, the camera follows the funeral procession and closely follows the laying of the body in the grave. The recording closes with the image of the gravediggers filling in the grave and one can get the impression that it ends suddenly, for example as if there was no more film tape. It is the last film of the Manaki brothers before the beginning of thirty-three years of war in the region.

From war to war

With the outbreak of the First Balkan War¹⁴, Bitola found itself in the centre of war events, which lasted until 1918. Due to the geopolitical situation, the last two pre-war films of the brothers were most likely not shown to the public. During the wars, the Manaki brothers worked primarily as photographers, and only three films from that period have survived in the Macedonian archives: *Alexander Karađorđević visiting Bitola* (Александар Караџорђевић во посета на Битола, 1912/1913), *The Parade of Serbian Army in Bitola* (Парада на српска војска во Битола, no date) and *The Reception of the Greek King and the Heir Pavle made by General Bojovic in Bitola* (Пречек на грчкиот крал и престолонаследникот Павле од страна на генерал Бојовиќ во Битола, 1918). *Alexander Karađorđević visiting Bitola*, in the style of the above-mentioned chronicles, documents the consecration of the monument (Старделов, 2003b, p.55), registering the arrival of the king by train, the ordination ceremony with the participation of dignitaries of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the signing of the document and a photo of King Alexander Karađorđević with Nikola Pašić posing.



Stills from the film: *The Reception of the Greek King and the Heir Pavle made by General Bojovic in Bitola*

During the First World War, the Manaki brothers faced many hardships. 1916 was exceptionally difficult. Earlier that year, after finding weapons and ammunition in a photographic atelier, Yanaki was arrested by the Bulgarian occupation authorities and interned in Plovdiv, where he opened a photographic studio a year later (Peterlić, 1990, p. 92). The Thessaloniki front was north of Bitola, and during the German bombardment in 1916 a grenade hit the studio of the

¹⁴ War between the Balkan League (composed of Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia) and the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and resulted in the Empire losing all territories in today's North Macedonia, Albania and much of Thrace in the same year.

Manaki brothers, which burned down. Since Bitola was heavily damaged during the war, intensive reconstruction and expansion of the city began after the war. Right after Yanaki's return from Bulgaria in 1919, the brothers rebuilt their photographic atelier. Over time, life in Bitola began to stabilize and the number of its inhabitants grew. The Manaki brothers undertook a new additional venture, namely, in 1921, they opened the open-air Manaki Cinema located on the main street of Bitola. According to Marian Țuțui's research, for the next two years they put all their efforts and financial resources into opening a permanent cinema. They established cooperation with the Chom brothers (Kosta/Costa and Taško/Tașcu Čom/Ciom) and Dimitri Georgievski (Tutui, 1, p.6) and in 1922 they bought better equipment needed for the functioning of the cinema from the Slovenian cinema Imperial. Huge investments in the construction of the cinema contributed to the brothers' financial difficulties, which forced them to cooperate with partners on their terms. Even before the opening of the cinema, in November 1923, they signed a sales contract with Kosta Chom and Georgievski. Based on this, by 1926, the Manakis' partners became the sole owners of the Manaki Cinema, and all decisions regarding its operation were made without the Manakis' participation. At the end of December 1923, a permanent cinema was opened with 373 seats on the ground floor and about 200 in boxes and on the balcony. The cinema burned down in a fire in 1939. (Tutui, 2021, p.160). In the 1930s, after the death of his wife, Yanaki moved to Thessaloniki with his son, where he again started working as a teacher in a Romanian commercial high school (Tutui, 1, p. 3) (there were no Romanian schools in Yugoslavia). Milton stayed in Bitola and continued to run a photography studio and World War II and the post-war geopolitical changes finally separated the brothers forever. They never met again. Yanaki lived in Thessaloniki (Greece) until his death in 1954. After World War II, Milton continued his artistic activity as a photographer in Bitola (then Yugoslavia).

The legacy of the Manaki brothers

Throughout the 1950s, in Yugoslavia, Milton's work was repeatedly honoured with various medals. He was recognized as a distinguished pioneer of Yugoslav film and received a memorial plaque in Bitola. His portrait appeared on a Yugoslav postage stamp in 1980 (Старделов, 1997, p. 11). Georges Sadoul himself sent his student to write a biography of Milton Manaki, but it was never finished.¹⁵ The only recording of Milton's participation is a Yugoslav short documentary by Croatian director Branko Ranitović, *Camera number*

¹⁵ Bitola belonged to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and from 1929 to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

300 (Kamera broj 300) from 1958, shot six years before Milton's death. In honour of the brothers, in 1979, on the initiative of the Macedonian Association of Film Professionals and in co-operation with the Cinematheque of Macedonia and the city of Bitola, the International Festival of Cinematographers "Manaki Brothers" was inaugurated – the world's oldest film festival dedicated to the work of cinematographers. The main prize is the Camera 300 statuette. In 2015 Bitola became a UNESCO City of Film and the "Manakis' film heritage is considered as a national cultural heritage (cultural monument) by our government" (of North Macedonia) (Stardelov, 1997, p.30).

The disintegration of the empire, nationalist aspirations, and the personal and professional choices of the Manaki brothers sparked a debate about their ethnicity among scholars during the last three decades. Their films are also included in many national cinematic discourses in the Balkans, from North Macedonia, through Greece, Romania, to Albania and Turkey:

The brothers Janaki and Milton Manaki were originally Vlachs, they fought for the introduction of the Romanian language in schools and churches, they exhibited in Bucharest, where they were promoted to court photographers of King Carol I and received awards and recognition for their photographic activity, making them belong to Romanian culture. On the other hand, they were born in today's Greece, then part of the Ottoman Empire, where they were educated, started and developed their photographic activity, which means that part of their work also belongs to Greek culture. In addition, they spent a large part of their working life in the Ottoman Empire, so Turkish culture can also boast of their work. But one should also consider the fact that the most intensive photography, as well as their main cinematographic activity, which was realized with the famous "Camera 300", coincides with their move, stay and work in Bitola. Therefore, with their most significant activity, cinematography, the Manaki brothers also belong to the Macedonian culture. (Старделов, 2003b, p.34).

In Greece, the first articles about the Manaki brothers appeared in the 1970s. In 1985, the association of Avdelliotes "*H Vasilitsa*" from the brothers' native village organized the events *Manakeia* 1985 and *Brothers Manakia - 80 Years of Greek Cinema* in Tyrnavos, Avdella and Athens. In 1995, *Manakeia '95* brought together everyone involved in the Manakis' lives and work: directors Nikos Antonakos and Fotos Lambrinos, journalists Christos Christodoulou and Georgis Exarchos, as well as the famous director Theo Angelopoulos, who in the same year, on the occasion of the centenary of world cinema, in *Odysseus' Gaze (Το βλέμμα του Οδυσσέα, 1995)* searches for the "lost" film reels of the Manaki brothers. Two documentaries were then made, and two books

published about the Manaki brothers (Χριστοδούλου, 1989; Exarchos, 1991). Albanian researchers and filmmakers also became interested in the Manaki brothers in the 1990s, when Abaz Xoxha, director of the Albanian Film Archive, started claiming that they were Albanians and included their work in Albanian cinema history (Xoxha, 1994).

Since the mid-1990s, the topic of the Manaki brothers has been a bone of contention in the film studies community of the aforementioned countries. In 1995, Christos Christodoulou published a book about the Manaki brothers in English which unambiguously connected them with Greek culture. In 1997, as part of the events of the European Capital of Culture Thessaloniki, another edition of the same book by Christodoulou was published (Christodoulou, 1997). As a response to the appropriation of the Manaki brothers by the Greeks, a series of articles by Macedonian and Romanian cinema historians criticizing Christodoulou appeared in the Macedonian film studies journal “Kinopsis” (Кинопис). For example, Tomislav Osmanli in his article believes that, regardless of the substantive richness, Christodoulou’s monograph is seriously burdened with national reductionism and represents an anachronistic approach to the question of the origin of the brothers. He also wonders whether the film heritage of the Manaki brothers from another apple of contention could become one of the elements of Balkan cultural cooperation. Osmanli also states that the reissue of this book under the banner of the European cultural event *Thessaloniki '97* should make the author revise his own views, but unfortunately it is still an attempt at unilateral ethnic and cultural appropriation (Османли, 1997, p.21). Marian Țuțui, a leading researcher of the Manakis’ works in Romania, believes in his article in “Kinopsis” that the Vlachs should be objectively perceived as a separate national minority, and at the same time he presents the brothers’ connections with Romania but does not try to appropriate them. He believes that the Manaki brothers belong to the cultural heritage of Macedonia, because it was their homeland, regardless of the current political power (Цуцуи, 1997, p. 38). Twenty years later, Țuțui recognizes that the Manakis’ work is important to the overall legacy of European cinema (Țuțui, 2017). In Romania, in 1995 and 2002, two documentaries were shot about the Manaki brothers¹⁶, scripted by Țuțui. In 2016, Eliza Zdru released a full-length documentary, *The Manaki Brothers. Diary of a Long Look Back (Frații Manakia. Jurnalul unei lungi priviri înapoi)*, shot as a Romanian-Greek-Bulgarian-Macedonian co-operation, in which the author’s reflections on family photography are gradually intertwined with the history of the life and work of the Manaki brothers. In 2017, the film was screened as part of the Manaki Brothers International Festival in Bitola.

¹⁶ Milton Manaki on Radio Skopje 5 December 1963.

In the 21st century, Turkey also joins the discussion on the work of the Manaki brothers. For many years, the film *Demolition of the Russian Monument in San Stefano*¹⁷ (*Ayastefanos'taki Rus Abidesinin Yıkılışı*, dir. Fuat Uzkınay) from 1914 was considered the first Turkish film. Back in 2014, Turkey celebrated the centenary of Turkish cinema, but as part of the festival, the *Manaki Brothers in Istanbul* (*Manaki Kardeşler İstanbul'da*) project¹⁸ prepared by ESR Film Production in cooperation with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the University of Fine Arts and the Macedonian Cinematheque was implemented as part of the festival. The recognition of the Manaki brothers as pioneers of Turkish cinema was problematic because, despite being subjects of the Ottoman Empire until the end of the Balkan Wars, they were considered ethnic Macedonians (Vlachs). As film historian Özde Çeliktemel-Thomen writes, if the Manaki brothers had been Turks, their place in Turkish film history could have been completely different (Çeliktemel-Thomen, 2009, p. 53). Historian Burçak Evren believes that the Manakis should be recognized as the pioneers of Turkish cinema and re-evaluated in the light of historical data from that period, as their films were made on the territory of Ottoman Turkey, document Turkish history and present the oldest film recordings of the Turks (Evren, 2013). Professor Rıdvan Şentürk even believes that the Manaki brothers should be considered “the Lumière brothers of the Ottoman period” (Şentürk, 2020). In recent years, two short documentaries about the brothers have been made: *The Manaki Brothers* (*Manaki Kardeşler*, 2019, TRT 2) as part of the TV programme *Spirit of History* (*Tarihin Ruhu*) and the documentary *Turkus – The first filmmakers from the Balkans the Manaki Brothers* (*Türkuaz - Balkanların İlk Sinemacıları Manaki Kardeşler*, 2020, TRT Avaz) as part of the *Their Turkey* (*Onların Türkiye'si*) programme.

Summary

This article, representing a synthesis of brighter research, is, on the one hand, an attempt to organize (objective) knowledge about the lives and works of the Manaki brothers, while on the other hand, an in-depth introduction to their film work. The consequences of national conflicts, wars and dynamic state-building changes in the region were, that the Wallachian Manaki brothers lived and worked in a multicultural region of Ottoman Empire (till 1912), under Serbian

¹⁷ *The Life and Work of the Manakias Brothers* (*Η ζωή και το έργο των αδελφών Μανάκια*, 1988, dir. Nikos Antonakos) and *Manakia Brothers* (*Αδελφοί Μανάκια*, 1988, rež. Costas Andritsos).

¹⁸ The film shows the demolition of the Russian Victory Monument, erected in San Stefano (district of Istanbul) after the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), and the reason for the demolition of the monument was the declaration of war between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire in 1914, during World War I, a director who recorded while in the army.

(1913) and Bulgarian (1915-1918) occupation, in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (from 1929 Kingdom of Yugoslavia) in the inter-war period (1918-1941), under German and Bulgarian occupation during the second world war, in Greece (Yanaki from 1937) and Socialist Yugoslavia (Milton) after the war. It needed for sure a lot of diplomatic skills to work freely and “uninterrupted” despite the constant changes of rulers and not to fall into their disfavour. In this geographical and ethnopolitical region of Europe, particularly in the Ottoman period the Manaki brothers immortalized on film tape the multicultural society and the crucial historical events of the early twentieth century. Their film documents constitute important testimonies for the historical and cultural heritage of Wallachians, as well as certifying significant historical and cultural heritage of many (new) states like North Macedonia, Turkey or Greece. In their films, they recorded events of historical importance for further countries, such as Serbia or Romania. The films of the Manaki brothers are not just random “recordings”, but documents that are characterized by an original sense of composition and staging of frames as well as the direction of scenes and entire newsreels. The dynamism of film documentaries is given by cutting between shots by turning the camera off and on. The frequent changes of filming locations, as well as the variety of shots and sets, also enrich the Manakis’ films, as well as their clear narrative intuition. One cannot disagree with Marian Țuțui that the work of the Manaki brothers is extremely important, not only for South-Eastern Europe (Balkan) – they are considered pioneers of national cinematography by North Macedonian, Yugoslavian, Greek, Romanian, Turkish and Albanian researchers, but for the entire European film heritage.

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