Reframing Space: Religion, History, and Memory in the Early Documentary Film of the Yugoslav Space

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Abstract
This paper examines cinematic representations of religion and religious communities in the early cinema of the Yugoslav space. This paper introduces the readers to the rich heritage of the cinema of the Yugoslav space by providing 1) the first study of the representations of religion and the concepts of faith in the early film, and 2) novel approaches in reading religion and history through film. Film is used as a primary rather than supplementary source in historical research on diverse religious and ethnic communities in this part of the Balkan Peninsula. This is the first study that investigates the importance, place, and role of religion in everyday life in the Yugoslav space through the case study of the early documentary film between 1896 and 1939. This paper will enrich scientific inquiry by providing new approaches for researching history through the documentary film.

Keywords
Religion, History, Memory, Documentary, Early Cinema, Yugoslav Space

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Introduction

This aim of this paper is to examine cinematic representations of religion in the early documentary film of the Yugoslav space. The representations of religion are examined through the analysis of frame. This paper has two goals: 1) to examine the ways in which the early filmmakers represented religion, and 2) to investigate the ways in which the filmmakers employed film language.

The paper argues that film can be used as a primary source in historical research through the analysis of frame. The films provide the first-hand picture about the concepts of faith, the harmonious relationship between different religious communities and its importance in the life of the peoples of the time in building their unique multireligious and multi-ethnic communities. Frame as the method of analysis facilitates the reading of historical content and the examination of the relationship between on-screen and off-screen spaces. It is through frame that this paper investigates the ways in which the early filmmakers achieve an ‘unbroken space – time’ to communicate the sense of the unbroken links between the people sharing the same space. Through the camera movements, montage, and framing the subjects juxtaposed to their environment, the specific intimacy is achieved. One of the central ideas of this paper is to examine how the films function iconographically. The early filmmakers strove to depict the factual reality: the physicality of people and objects and the geography of the landscape are not used as symbols but represent what they really are. However, it is precisely in this process of depicting the factual that the physicality and geography of spaces become images. The iconographic function of film is in achieving an image composed from the factual, the ‘everydayness’ of life, but through which the ontological is transcended.

This paper focuses on the following films: The Procession of St. Duje (Procesija Sv. Duje, Josip Karaman 1911), Return of the Serbian Victors (Povratak srpskih pobednika, 1913), The Funeral of Lieutenant Živojin Marinković (Pogreb potporučnika Živojina Marinkovića, Đorđe Bogdanović, 1913), Oath of the Vardar Regiment Soldiers (Zakletva regruta Vardarskog puka, Đorđe Bogdanović, Cvetković brothers, Slavko Jovanović, unknown cameraman, 1914), and Under the Yugoslav Skies (Pod jugoslovenskim nebom, Miodrag Mika Đorđević 1934). While the first four films, made in the pre-WWI period, are important for understanding the development of film language and the ways it
was employed to frame religion, the last film *Under the Yugoslav Skies* (1934) represents a crown of the artistic developments of the previous era. By religion, which is in the films represented both explicitly and implicitly, this paper refers to the diverse communities and people of different religious-ethnic backgrounds as well as their religious symbols, rituals, and customs. Rather than being a sole topic in the films, religion is integrated into the historical narrative of the period and area that the films depict.

Although cinema developed before the formation of Yugoslavia, I employ the term ‘Yugoslav space’ to secure a more focused approach on the specific geographical area and the local filmmakers who were of diverse ethnic backgrounds but continuously co-created in this geo-cultural space of changing borders.¹ Furthermore, the films originated in the area in which the state of South Slavs would be formed² and the majority of these films are preserved in the Yugoslav Cinematheque where they remain archived under the category of ‘Yugoslav cinema’ to the present day. The focus is on the early film pioneers who rose from the ground-up to document the life around them. It is of scientific interest to understand how these early filmmakers, some of whom remain unknown, and some of whom were members of the communities they filmed, ‘saw themselves’ and the society around them. The films of the early period appeared as not limited by theme: they are multi-layered stories about the people and places, representing an invaluable historical resource. The techniques developed at this time include panoramas, dynamic tracking, crane photography, deep focus cinematography, and a poetic negotiation of on-screen and off-screen space. While early cinema in the territory of Yugoslavia has been understudied in the scholarly literature, research on the representations of religion in the early documentary films is non-existent. This paper aims to fill to this gap.

I. History, Religion and the Reel

While contemporary religion and film in Yugoslavia and the Balkan Peninsula have been examined primarily in relation to ethnicity and nationhood, there are no studies on religion and religious communities in the early cinema of this area. Likewise, there is no comprehensive study of the early films in international scholarship and works on early cinema of the Yugoslav space remain limited.
primarily to domestic authors. Furthermore, in current scholarship there is no thorough investigation of the early documentary practices in the Yugoslav space: the three-volume Routledge Encyclopaedia of the Documentary Film states that during the time of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia “documentary production was very lively” without clarifying what this exactly entailed, and it provides only a short paragraph on the pre-1918 context, omitting the rich documentary tradition and its historical significance. Likewise, the Encyclopedia of Early Cinema offers a general one-page overview on cinematic developments in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Romania. The research on film in the Balkan Peninsula, particularly on Yugoslavia, is limited to the post-WWII period. Scholars such as Daniel J. Goulding and Pavle Levi begin their research with the socialist period and altogether omit the pre-1945 period from their analysis. Other specialized research on Yugoslav cinema also remains limited to the socialist and post-socialist periods, lacking any form of critical study of its early beginnings. The bulk of scholarship focuses on either post-WWII feature films, or the films that emerged during the disintegration of Yugoslavia, exploring industry, festivals, or the topics of political ideologies, nationalism, ethnic conflict, and the mythological representations of the Balkans.

The relationship between the medium of film and the field of historical inquiry goes back to the beginning of the 20th century. Film is historical material, and it is historians who discussed the ways in which film can be integrated into historical studies. David Ludvigsson shows that as early as 1916 historians began to consider film as evidence and in the 1920s and 1930s a group under the Comité International des Sciences Historiques devised the principles regulating “the selection and preservation of film sources” which led to the establishment of the International Iconographical Commission. In 1937 the British Film Institute began to use historians to “ratify” historical films, which, in addition to letting a film institution credit historical authenticity, is significant for connecting the domains of film production and historical inquiry. In 1938 The International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) was established in Paris, with its mission to preserve moving image heritage by recognizing films “both as works of art and culture and as historical documents,” a practice it continues to this day as a world-leading federation of more than 173 institutions across
79 countries. Post-war interest flourished and grows today with significant developments from the perspective of historical studies and that of film studies, with historical, heritage and archive institutions playing a big role in the process of advocating for the historical worth of moving images.

Among historians, John E. O’Connor, a pioneer in “developing the academic study of cinema in the discipline of history” recognized the importance of studying the moving image. O’Connor offers four ways for historians to approach film: as a representation of history, as insights into the social and cultural values of the past, as a form of historical evidence, and as a study of the history of its industry. By contrast Robert Rosenstone, one of the leading experts in history and film, argues that, when it comes to history on film, historians should treat film in the same way they treat and validate the historical text. Rosenstone identified two major approaches that predominate in the study of the historical film: the explicit and the implicit. He criticises both: the “explicit approach” for its inability to identify a “specific role for the film that talks about historical issues” through film forms and film language “due to its insistence and preoccupation with situating film historically” and the “implicit approach” for observing film merely as “a book transferred to the screen.” Rosenstone is further interested in how historical films convey the past. In his critical analysis he suggests that in order to “understand the possibilities and actualities of the medium in which history is presented (words on a page, or images on a screen accompanied by sound and word)” and to consider “the very possibilities of history on film” it is necessary “to create a new frame” that would include “the larger realm of past and present” in which both histories (history on film and history on the page) are “located and to which both refer.” Rosenstone, in other words, is concerned about approaches that either focus solely on the context in which a film was made or observe film as a written text on the screen. His proposal is to create a frame in studying history through film which would serve as a platform in which both written history (in books) and the representation of history in film will complement each other. Following Rosenstone’s line of inquiry, this study aims to offer a new approach in researching film in relation to history by focusing upon film language, by which history is written on the reel and embedded within the cinematic space.
In film studies Paolo Cherchi Usai and Bill Nichols provided “interpretive tools and conceptual models” in studying early film and made an important introduction to the study, research and preservation of silent cinema and its representations of reality. While their theoretical framework is significant, this study follows in the footsteps of Nichols in the sense that it does not aim to “import the theories” but rather to use the critical method of frame, without theoretical presumptions, in order to address “the entire structure and all the elements” of film language within the early documentary film of the Yugoslav space. It is important to acknowledge that scholars of religion and film have sought to develop a more interdisciplinary approach in investigating world cinema. Scholars such as Jolyon Mitchell and S. Brent Plate have assembled rare and insightful material related to conceptualisations of film, together with the historical developments and the early beginnings of cinema in different parts of the world, from Europe to Africa, Asia, and the Americas. However, in examining the early beginnings of cinema in relation to religion, scholars have predominantly focused on biblical narratives in early Hollywood cinema. While the studies of religion and film offer an abundance of significant scholarly material, they show an evident lack of research on religion and early cinema in the Balkan Peninsula.

II. The Past through Documentary: Approaches and Methods

How do we look at the past and how are we to understand history on the reel? Can film really be a primary source for understanding certain events, people, and their relationships? Willem Hesling, referring to the recreation of the past, argues that historical film can “convey a more poetic-symbolic historical truth” without losing its credibility, that is, that film images can express truth “in a literal way” or try “to convey it in a metaphorical sense.” Is Hesling’s argument applicable also to the study of the early documentaries, with their recreation of ‘past’ events? While the early documentaries recorded their actual ‘present,’ certain filmmakers applied a poetic approach in depicting historical events. Specific historical events were sometimes staged and recreated, for the purposes of the storyline, where the meaning of certain historical events is crucial and therefore expressible through the form of film language. These recreated events were usually from the recent historical past such...
as in *Under the Yugoslav Skies*, where the original footage from WWI was lost, but the events that bear the *meaning* of the suffering, as in the retreat across Albania, had to be expressed. This is where a poetic approach to reality and the actuality of the events recorded by the camera was applied by the early pioneers. This poetics is conveyed by film language and represents the early efforts of filmmakers to communicate the meanings of suffering, life, and death as well as the multiple dimensions of the spaces they depict. This approach does not detract from a film’s historical credibility, on the contrary: the filmmaker’s approach to reality frequently reveals a personal relationship to the subject(s). Svetozar Botorić argued that films should be made wherever there is an interest in that which film can offer, that is, in the possibility of the unification with the world in which one participates through creating one’s own experience and history instead of merely identifying with that of others.²³ Film is a document and a powerful one as it contains a moving image, but more importantly film operates with time and space. One of the most accurate ways to assess and read this document is through its own language. Film language is a powerful language, which historians frequently overlook in their research: to read history in film requires one to understand the film language, besides understanding the context, the industry, and other historical materials related to a certain film. Cinematic space is determined by film language: it contains on-screen space, ‘what we see’ on the reel as recorded by the camera, but also contains off-screen space: ‘what we do not see’ explicitly in the film but which enters the cinematic space through the ways the filmmakers employ film language. It is important to remember that cinematic space contains within itself numerous spaces, to which I refer in this paper as geographical and physical.

Studying how filmmakers *frame* the content—specific people, objects, traditions, and events—by the means of film language shows us their relationship to the subjects they film. Frame as a method of analysis expands historical readings of film as a document to a more inclusive examination of film language. Understanding form contributes to understanding the specific socio-political, religious, cultural, and wider historical context in which a film was made. The negotiation of on-screen and off-screen space best testifies to the filmmaker’s ability to extract, articulate, and mediate the human condition in a specific time and place. It is through cinematic space that we learn
about the conditions in which they film, often determined by historical circumstances.\textsuperscript{24} At the same time the degree of their artistic innovation such as deep focus\textsuperscript{25} testifies both to the creative capacities of filmmakers and to the cultural context in which they create. By placing the study of film language, frame (method of analysis), and space (object of analysis) at the heart of research, this paper aims to advance scientific inquiry, offering scholars novel ways of examining historical content through film.

III. Pioneering Film: Context

On the 6th of June 1896 the first film screening on the Balkan Peninsula opened at the ‘Golden Cross’ on the luxurious Terazije Square in Belgrade, Kingdom of Serbia. The audience greeted the first moving images presented to them by the representative of the Lumière Brothers, André Carre.\textsuperscript{26} Their programme ran until the end of the month and would be attended by the monarch King Aleksandar Obrenović. Eight years later, the new monarch King Petar I Karadorđević would become a subject of cinematic interest: footage of his crowning in 1904 would go down in history as the oldest documentary film made in this part of the world.\textsuperscript{27} Documentary film developed almost immediately with the birth of cinema and the emergence of the first film pioneers, sparking interest and enthusiasm for the new medium which grew among domestic audiences. In the territory that would become the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (1918), and then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929), cinema flourished.

It is important to bear in mind that the specific areas of the Yugoslav space did not have the borders they have today. The Yugoslav space was perceived as a so-called ‘meeting point’ of the two empires, the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but also as the space of the liberation struggles, in which among the first to rise would be Serbia and Montenegro.\textsuperscript{28} The time when film emerges in the Balkan Peninsula in 1896 coincides with the new progressive ideas and the development of political tendencies for the unification of South Slavs.\textsuperscript{29} After the first film screening in the Balkans at the ‘Golden Cross’ on Terazije Square in Belgrade, this area became a home of travelling film artists and cinematographers. The early works of traveling cinematographers, such as the films of André Carre, remain lost. However, we know from discovered and restored extracts of

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other films that the early cinematographers closely engaged with the political and historical events as well as with the life of the local communities. The work of the two Englishmen Andre Muir Wilson and Frank Mottershow became the oldest documentary filmed in the Balkans: *The Coronation of King Peter I of Serbia*. This film along with *Proclamation of Montenegro for a Kingdom* (1910)\(^{30}\) testify to the engagement of the early cinematographers with socio-political changes and important state events. The moving image received great attention and it was Svetozar Botorić who opened the first permanent cinema in the hotel Paris, and by the Great War only the Kingdom of Serbia would have thirty fully-operating cinemas.\(^{31}\)
Likewise in Vojvodina, northern Serbia (at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire), Ernest Bošnjak (Bosnyák Ernő) opened the first permanent cinema *Arena* in Sombor in 1906.\(^{32}\) Zagreb and Pula also gained their first cinemas, *Union* and *Internacional*, followed by a number of cinemas in all bigger cities of today’s Croatia. In 1907 Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina opened their first cinemas, *Edison* and *Edison Amerikan Bioskop*. Davorin Rovšek’s *Edison* became “the first purpose-built cinema hall on the soil of the Yugoslav countries.”\(^{33}\) In 1908 the first cinema opened in Montenegro (*kafana Lovćen*) while today’s North Macedonia obtained a cinema (*Vardar cinema*) in 1912 after the First Balkan War.

Many cameramen were amateurs coming from different professions and backgrounds. The practice of engaging with film from the grass-root level blossomed in the Yugoslav space, where many of the important filmmakers, prior to the formation of the first state of South Slavs in 1918, operated as independent film enthusiasts, self-organized producers, and amateur directors disconnected from the state\(^{34}\) who continued with this practice after 1918.\(^{35}\) Prior to the Second World War some of the greatest innovations would take place in the medium: films made by the medium’s forerunners like Đorđe Bogdanović and Svetozar Botorić already developed distinguishing characteristics such as deep focus cinematography. This was a “Pericle’s era” of cinematography: film was not considered a sign of the new age of modernity, but as a means of artistically communicating human experiences.\(^{36}\) For early producers such as Botorić authenticity and originality were not just the matter of an individual but of the whole society.\(^{37}\) In other words, film was never understood as mere entertainment.\(^{38}\) Film historian Bosa Slijepčević reminds us that the filmmakers
sought to find authentic expression that comes from within, not just themselves but also of the people and society; they needed “something more,” warmth and meaning that spring from the domestic history and culture. 39

The growth of cinemas and the active presence of the travelling cinematographers such as Karl W. Freund, the ‘father of the unchained camera technique’ who moved to Belgrade in 1911, infused new interest in film art. 40 They directly contributed to its further developments: emerging film pioneers and blossoming of the film practice in this exciting and rich period gave birth to the filmmakers who recorded important events but also the life around them. This engagement with the state and national events would develop in particular during the Great War and the formation of the Kingdom. What is striking in these early films is an ‘informal approach’ in filming formal events. For instance, the camera ‘searches’ for the people involved, who often ‘enter the shot’ unexpectedly, and in other cases the camera is interested in the people, while the King almost unexpectedly enters the shot. Although this can be misinterpreted as a lack of experience in filming formal events, I argue that this approach is a style of the early period, where the camera appears to move freely ‘beyond the frame’ and the main story.

The early documentary films provide us with rare historical material and first-hand insight into the life of diverse communities, religious and national customs, and events which remain solely preserved in the documentary films. The first documentaries did not only engage with cultural, religious, and state events but also with the environment. Slavko Jovanović’s first film was on Floods in Belgrade (Poplave u Beogradu, 1911) while Botorić’s Belgrade at Winter (1914) depicts the iceberg movements on the rivers Sava and Danube for the first time on film. Botorić creates a unique cinematic space integrating geographical and physical spaces of the city, capturing its topography with its social fabric (physicality is framed through the geography of the land) and the spatial, temporal, architectural, ecological, and seasonal constitution. The movement of the ice shows a concern for capturing environmental change rarely seen on film in this early period. The close proximity to the ice provides an equally technically fascinating use of the camera which illustrates both movement and stasis, cinematic tracking and observational photography (Figure 1). Botorić’s
Belgrade at Winter is a unique document about the city that has been many times destroyed, and thus the film stands as a testament of its time. His approach at the same time produces a sense of ‘timeless time’ within the cinematic space, by capturing the innocence of nature and its stillness and movement as a part of the everyday life of the citizens, shortly before the outbreak of the Great War.

Figure 1: Iceberg movement, Belgrade 1914. Source: Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Diversity in the representation of people abounds in early film. A Gypsy Wedding (Ciganka Svadba, Čića Ilija Stanojević) from 1911 represents one of the earliest depictions of life and customs of the Roma community in Europe, while Wedding in Majdevo (Svadba u Majdevu, 1911) is the first Serbian ethnological film. The cameraman of both films was Louis De Beery, who was also the cameraman for the first Serbian feature film. De Beery recorded The Reception for Croatian Students in Belgrade (The Savić Brothers) in 1912, a significant reportage showcasing the young ‘people’s elite’ and charitable societies. The struggles for the union of Dalmatia and Croatia grew into the South Slav movement challenged by the Austro-Hungarian politics which “relied upon ethnic conflicts between the Croats and the Serbs.” In that sense, early film always had certain transnational dimensions. However, it is important to bear in mind that some of the travelling artists portrayed subjects through a separatist lens, often exoticizing the locals and their respective customs. By contrast, the early local filmmakers depart from this oriental approach. The reason perhaps lies in the fact that the domestic filmmakers emerged from the grass roots to document the life and the communities of which they were an integral part. For them, religious communities were neither exotic nor segregated but formed an integral part of the rich fabric of life in this area of the world.
The representations of religion and faith on the reel in this early period are not thematised but rather they are integrated into the cinematic space, constituting a part of the story. The more thematic approach develops with the formation of the Kingdom, where churches, synagogues, and mosques are integrated into the films of the young Kingdom, aiming to depict its diversity and rich cultural heritage. Regardless of the subject of interest, the times of peace or the times of war, it is the theme of people that permeates the early films, while religion is an integral part of the story of the people.

IV. Reframing Space: Film Analysis

As early as 1904 the films integrating religion and faith emerge. The first documentary The Coronation of the King Peter I of Serbia integrates already the images of the sacred, religious customs, figures, and places of worship. It is the Manaki brothers who created some of the most picturesque filmic documents about life in the area of today’s North Macedonia, Greece, and other bordering areas. Their opus contains the early cinematic recordings of the celebrations of St. George, St. Cyril, and Methodius, but also weddings, funerals, processions, and customs of the diverse local population. While The Coronation of the King Peter I of Serbia and the films of the Manaki brothers require a separate study, in this paper I focus on selected films from the 1910s and the feature-length documentary Under the Yugoslav Skies from 1934.

The Procession of St. Duje (Procesija Sv. Duje) from 1911 by Josip Karaman is one of the first films on religious customs on the Dalmatian cost. It is important to remember that “at the time of its first films, Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.” However, there were already aspirations for unification of Dalmatia and Croatia, which then “grew into a movement to unite all South Slavic nations.” The political tensions around ‘Germanization’ and the struggles with Italians in Dalmatia were “reflected in cinema” where the choice of language in the subtitles revealed the political stance. The Procession of St. Duje is one of the first documentaries in this area, which depicts the religious celebration of the patron saint of Split, Saint Domnius, locally known as St. Duje. Karaman is rather ‘informal’ in his approach: in the opening scenes the camera ‘mingles’
among the people, moving through the crowd, depicting the faces and giving an insight into the festive atmosphere and diverse people on the streets of Split. During the procession the camera is more static, placed ‘on the side’ among the people who express their respect. The shots were taken from the eastern and western part of the Square. The camera itself appears as in the celebratory mode, as one of the people capturing the participants of the procession, such as the children (orphans), nuns, brotherhoods, gymnasium students, locals, fire brigade, orchestra, priests both Franciscan and Dominican, the Bishop and the relics. Although the camera is static for most of the procession it changes angles to focus on the faces of the people who ‘enter’ the cinematic space spontaneously, capturing the festive atmosphere. The camera is observational and in close proximity to the people which provides intimacy both with the procession and the people in the street (Figure 2).

![Figure 2: The Procession of St. Duje, Split. Source: Croatian Film Archive.](image)

Karaman recorded other important local events which involve religious customs such as the occasion of the *Funeral of Mayor Vicko Mihaljevic* (1911), a prominent figure connected to the Croatian National Revival in Split, thus leaving behind the first historical imprints of his hometown on the reel. The early films that were shot in the territory of Yugoslavia actively engaged with life around them, and in doing so, they filmed the first images of religious life, offering insights into the
role that religion played in the life of the local people, but also in ‘national awakening’ and the preservation of identity (often against “Germanization” in the territories under the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the new aspirations for liberation). Filmmakers who produced the first documentary reportages on places and events developed professionally and improved rapidly. This was the case with Josip Halla (1880-1960) who in 1912 was a “Balkan War correspondent for the French company Éclair” and became the filmmaker who “shot the first Croatian feature films in 1917.” Due to the historical circumstances, the pre-WWI documentary films followed the events related to the Balkan Wars, particularly in the Kingdom of Serbia, while some cameramen and prominent producers often joined the troops and filmed at the front.

The rapid development of film art resulted in rich and innovative approaches to the representations of the people and the world around them. One such film, which also dealt with the subject of war and liberation, is Return of the Serbian Victors (Povratak srpskih pobednika, 1913). Produced by the most important filmmakers of the time: Đorđe Bogdanović, who has a cameo appearance in the film, the Cvetković brothers, and possibly Svetozar Botorić, and filmed by the cameraman Slavko Jovanović and other unknown cameramen, the film follows the festive welcome of the warriors returning from the Second Balkan War in the streets of Belgrade. This is one of the important filmic testimonies about the official state event, depicting the religious figures, King Petar I and the Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadorđević, state representatives, foreign consuls, societies and civil organizations, and citizens. The camera follows the preparations, welcoming, and movement of the army through the most significant landmarks of the city of Belgrade to the Kalemegdan Fortress. The film incorporates the shots of the Kalemegdan Fortress at the confluence of the two rivers of the Danube and Sava and the life around it, before returning to the climax of the event: the unveiling of the statue of Vožd Karadorđe Petrović, which takes place in the presence of the King, the highest state officials and consuls.

The film incorporates several different spaces of the city to compose one tale about the capital as an image of freedom. Opening with the pan shot of the festive and bustling crowd in waiting, it displays the atmosphere in the streets of Belgrade. The filmmakers apply the aforementioned
‘informal approach’ to the formal event, capturing the unexpected such as the falling horse or the children playing football as seen from the Kalemegdan Fortress, which induces a rather spontaneous jovial atmosphere and leaves the impression that the film is both observational and participatory. Between the parade and official events, the camera focuses on figures such as Duke Radomir Putnik. Filmed in a rather unusual way, Putnik appears in the shot sitting in a chair as if posing for a photograph while behind him is a woman observing the event through the window of her home, the children on one side and the people on the other side. Framing Radomir Putnik between and among the people places the Duke as a hero who emerged from the people, as he is a part of them and they are a part of him. (Figure 3).

The film continues with the official parade, the camera placed on the side among the citizens, capturing the cavalry and the youngsters walking beside the army. Rather than placing the army in central focus the film brings an unexpected degree of spontaneity as it is the children who ‘frame’ the army in an asymmetrical side shot. Their faces are turned towards the camera, establishing intimacy with the audience, and their movements as they pass the camera create the sense of an elongated diagonal space that begins and ends far beyond our field of vision (Figure 4).
The parade leads to the climax of the film: the unveiling and blessing of the monument of Vožd Karadorde Petrović\textsuperscript{55} considered as the father of the modern Serbian state dynasty. The ceremony of the unveiling of the monument consists of several segments: the speeches, the images of people and guests, the Royal Lodge, the prayer and blessing. The monument is framed with the people: clergy in the foreground under the canopy, behind them the battery arms, in the centre the speaker, above him the monument, and in the background people surrounding the monument with decorations flying above them (Figure 5). The shot represents a vibrant composition: the circular blocking, the horizontal distribution of the people, and the vertical stage of the monument create a dynamic space of memory. Historical memory (of the uprising in 1804) represented in the monument (of the Vožd Karadorde) is depicted not as remembrance of a distant past but is related to the recent memory of the Balkan Wars.
The film actualizes the history and the effects of both the wars and the liberation on the lives of the people gathered. The film conceptualises the meaning of the sacred, which enters the cinematic space through the depiction of the religious custom of the prayer and the blessing of the people and the memorial space. While the shot may signify the close relationship between the crown and the modern state, the conceptualisation of the sacred is more than political. The act of the blessing of the memorial and the present people contains liturgical memory (of God) who reveals his ‘presence in the present’ and this penetration of the timeless into the actual event is communicated through film language. The filmmaker creates a continuity of space, in which image, time, and memory merge. In depicting the unveiling of the monument as a living dialogue between the living and the dead, the past is conveyed as present and memory as an active state of life. Hence, the filmmaker depicts the city from a crane-like shot, achieved most probably from the roof tops, to close the film with the camera “leaving” the Kalemegdan Fortress.
The documentary contains one of the longest tracking shots of the era (Figure 6). Rather than moving forward the shot goes backwards, towards the place where the ceremony started. Like a tapestry, ever greater details unfold: from the Kalemegdan Fortress to Terazije Square the festive, post-ceremonial city teems with life: men, women and children, decorated buildings and banners. The shot represents a great example of the negotiation between on-screen and off-screen space as the author’s focal point evolves and points beyond the represented. In the former, by propelling the camera to observe subjects through continuous movement, the film creates the sense of an unbroken space and one whose magnitude and complexity grows as the camera reveals ever newer parts of the subjects that constitute it. In the latter, the shot creates a tension from the appearance and actions of different people in the street to the architecture, animals, and banners creating the sense of an open-ended film which poses the question of what lies beyond the screen. At the same time this last tracking shot endows the film with wholeness because it unites the subjects, actions, and the place which they inhabit as portrayed in episodic tableaux thus far into one continuous shot and indicates the main story is about something much larger that is of significance for all people in the area.
Another important film from the same year is *The Funeral of Lieutenant Živojin Marinković* (*Pogreb potporučnika Živojina Marinkovića*, Đorđe Bogdanović, 1913). This documentary is one of the first films that introduces the sense of *deep focus* and *deep space* in film. Thematically, the film focuses on the funeral service of Lieutenant Marinković. However, this film represents the best example of the beautiful developments and innovations in pre-war cinematography. Bogdanović’s deep focus appears through the several layers of the frame: priests, burial, fence, soldiers, children, and houses (See Figure 7). The documentary shows Bogdanović’s personal approach to the subject through the conceptualisation of film language with visual subtlety and emotional depth in the portrayal of death, memory, and community. The film depicts the religious rite in an original way and frames the ‘sacred’ in the documentary genre by developing a new and innovative approach in reflecting on life and death.

![Figure 7: Beginnings – Deep Focus, Đorđe Bogdanović, 1913. Source: Yugoslav Cinematheque.](https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol27/iss2/3)

*Oath of the Vardar Regiment Soldiers* (*Zakletva regruta Vardarskog puka*, Đorđe Bogdanović, Cvetković brothers, Slavko Jovanović, unknown cameraman, 1914) is an early documentary of immense importance for studying film, history and religion. It focuses on the major event of the oath of the soldiers from the Vardar region held on 13 April 1914, in the lower Kalemegdan Fortress at the dawn of the Great War. Bogdanović, the Cvetković brothers, and the
cameraman Jovanović applied an innovative approach to the filming of the event, integrating at the same time the social-political, historical, cultural, and the sacred into the cinematic space. The filmmakers employ an interesting meta-cinematic technique: the cameraman captures the other cameramen (See Figure 8), thereby depicting the process of filmmaking within the film, pioneering for its time and which would reach its peak in the meta-cinematic montage of Dziga Vertov.

![Figure 8: Filming the sacred, pioneering the cinema: film within the film, 1914. Source: Yugoslav Cinematheque.](image)

Their innovation in filming the official event reflects in the panoramas of soldiers, clergy, priests and the rabbi, the Crown Prince, and the people, situating them within the architecture of the military fortress and the surrounding nature. During the service conducted by the Orthodox priests led by Sava Radenović, the filmmakers frequently cut to an unusual panorama of Kalemegdan, capturing the immensity of nature, to confront the architecture amidst the nature and then turn to ‘look’ again at the plethora of army recruits framed in a slanted high angle. The film offers an unconventional perspective which gives us a sense of the participants in the context of their environment rather than official military footage dominated by exposition and personages. The film offers a unique depiction of the Belgrade Chief Rabbi Dr. Isak Alkalaj, later the president of the Federation of Rabbis of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. According to the archival source, “the soldiers of the Moses religion are sworn by the Belgrade rabbi, Isak Alkalaj, according
to the rituals of their creed."59 The Rabbi is positioned before the soldiers, of which one holds the flag of the Kingdom of Serbia, while the camera is positioned closer to Rabbi Alkalaj (See Figure 9).

![Figure 9: Rabbi Isak Alkalaj, 1914. Source: Yugoslav Cinematheque.](image)

After the Oath is given, the camera moves in a slow pan shot in the direction to which the Rabbi is turned, Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadordević saluting (See Figure 10).

![Figure 10: The Crown Prince Aleksandar Karadordević, 1914. Source: Yugoslav Cinematheque.](image)
What is particularly important is the directors’ negotiation of the on-screen and the off-screen spaces in ‘framing the sacred’. By applying the slow pan, moving from the Rabbi to the Crown Prince, the filmmakers gradually incorporate the unseen, that is, the ‘off-screen’ space. After three minutes of the camera’s focus on the Rabbi and the oath-taking, interrupted by the intertitles (added in the restoration of the film), the camera shifts towards the Crown Prince.

Uninterrupted slow movement shifting the focus from the Rabbi towards the Crown Prince creates the sense of an ‘unbroken space,’ and as shown in Figure 11, Rabbi Alkalaj and Crown Prince Aleksandar are positioned on the same level, the Rabbi standing still while the Crown Prince salutes. The continuity and geometrical balance indicate the reciprocation between people of different faiths in the Kingdom of Serbia and their unity. The footage represents an important historical document for the studies of history, religion, and culture and in particular Serbian-Jewish relations at the turn of the 20th century. The film is useful as a primary source for revealing the participation of Jews in public life, their position in the monarchy, and a meaningful exchange between Orthodox and Jewish faiths in an event of a shared social and sacred character: a unique example of such material captured on film. The film also points beyond the screen as it speaks about plurality in a society in which
clergy, monarch and people participate and are each in their own turn honored: while the oath taking primarily refers to the soldiers, the oath of service is rendered in the blessing given by the priests and the chief rabbi and through the salute by the future king.

Made after the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was renamed to Yugoslavia in 1929, the documentary film *Under the Yugoslav Skies* (*Pod jugoslovenskim nebom*, Miodrag Mika Đorđević, 1934) represents a unique depiction of the united kingdom, taking the viewers on a journey from Belgrade, Zagreb, Bled, the Adriatic coast (with Sisak, Split and Dubrovnik), the Krka River and Šibenik, the Bay of Kotor, Sarajevo, Mostar, and Jajce to the medieval monasteries of Serbia, the Kosovo field and Ohrid. The film was produced by Yugoslav Educational Film and features music by the renowned composer Stanislav Binički. The film contains the only sound recording of the Yugoslav King Aleksandar I Karadordević, but also the first film sound recording of the Islamic Takbir (*تَكْبِير*), *Allahu Akbar* (in Arabic) or “God is greatest.” Taking the motif of a journey down river, the film forms the mosaic of the country and the people that imbue it with life. Đorđević employs tracking shots, panoramas, bird-eye perspectives, cross fades, and parallel editing, creating a dynamic space which includes wide geographical spaces with great details of the people, the cities, and nature. Đorđević’s film has a transformative dimension reflecting the transformations taking place in the state, which in the pre-WWI period was often seen through the camera-eye as a meeting point of the West and the “Oriental” East. The camera ‘takes its time’ in examining the people: their actions, motivations, mood, work ethic and surrounding atmosphere. Rather than seeing his subjects from the outside, curiously investigating a ‘foreign culture,’ Đorđević establishes a more intimate approach to the people and composes a unique cinematic space through a lyrical use of mise-en-scène, camerawork and montage. The director frequently focuses on water: it represents the starting point for the journey and variates throughout the film in the image of waterfalls, rivers, streams, lakes, and the sea. Water is a powerful motif in the film, linking the different geographical spaces with the people who inhabit them: it is a tool of connection symbolising life and transformation. Đorđević, while bringing to attention the Sokol Defile and the idea of pan-Slavism, is much more interested in going further to arrive at the poetic consideration of the Yugoslav space and its societal...
transformations. It is through film language that we can understand that the transformation is taking place in society, uniting all its peoples of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. In that sense, Đorđević’s film is important as a landmark of 1930s European cinema. Even when considered as a production supported by the state, it is interesting that the film seeks to account for difference and shows the integration of a range of communities into society. By comparison, 1934 is also the year in which Leni Riefenstahl in the Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* employed film language to separate the spaces and communities and promote an ethnically homogenous vision of society in line with the totalitarian policies of the state.61

Religion and religious communities are integrated into the film as a part of the story about the people: Đorđević depicts religious practices, celebrations, and customs. In Sarajevo his camera appears to peer into the Mosque, depicting the people preparing for the prayer: an asymmetrical shot captures people in action, contrasted with the ornamental backdrop indicating the sacred space and the prayer to follow (See Figure 12). His focus on the Muezzin’s call to prayer provides an iconic image of prayer in film, while the topography of the city and the hills indicates the off-screen space as the sight of the worship (See Figure 13). It is a skilful negotiation between the on-screen and off-screen: precisely the moment of prayer to which we are invited but do not enter as viewers.

![Figure 12: Preparing for the prayer, 1934. Source: Yugoslav Cinematheque.](image-url)
Dorđević communicates the diversity of the spaces through an iconic panning shot of the Mostar bridge. The bridge as the main protagonist represents the physical connection and the pan establishes the visual connection between the Mosque and the Church on the different sides of the city (See Figures 14 and 15). It is important to note that Mostar was a multiethnic town in which different faith groups (Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox Christian, and Roman Catholic) coexisted peacefully. Dorđević’s panning shot aims to accentuate the unity of the people sharing the same geographical and cultural space.
The film further depicts spaces of worship and the physicality of buildings and surroundings in the cities (Sarajevo) and on the islands (Bay of Kotor). The image of the Catholic Church (See Figure 16), filmed from a lower angle and framed to emphasize the verticality of its structure, connotes the stability that stands ‘out of time.’ The timeless nature of worship is captured in the shot of the Catholic Church on the island (see Figure 17): surrounded by water and mountains, it conceptualizes faith as a concrete experience but unseen in the shot, ‘the eyes of the world’ (it is both within our field of vision and beyond our reach). The shot suggests a different experience of time as associated with monastic life, the flow of the water and the stillness of the mountainous landscape indicating the transformative nature of faith and its inseparability from the local context.
Đorđević however enters some spaces of worship: his filming of Titian’s painting as well as that of the Orthodox frescoes, with the slow camera movement and focus on the details that constitute the whole composition, represent a unique artistic conceptualisation of faith of the time.
In depicting the medieval monasteries, the recording of the Gračanica Monastery contains both the depiction of the people during the religious celebration and the monastery itself. The camera moves from the depictions of the building to the people surrounding it, giving the impression of ‘oneness’ (See Figure 18) reinforced by the shift to the focus on the faces of the people, the celebrants. The previous dynamism of motion brings out the significance of stillness in contemplating faith in everyday life (See Figure 19).

Figure 18: Gračanica Monastery, Kosovo Field, 1934. Source: Yugoslav Cinematheque.

Figure 19: ‘Gaze into the Future’: Gračanica Monastery, Kosovo Field, 1934. Source: Yugoslav Cinematheque.
Đorđević records one of the first Slava celebrations of the monastery Gračanica in Kosovo Polje (Kosovo Field), moving from the people and the customary celebration to the shots of the Gračanica Monastery to focus on the stateliness of the building and the details of the frescoes. Đorđević’s depiction of the Gračanica Monastery is rather poetic. Through the artistic form of film language, he builds the cinematic space as a space of memory where frescoes transcend ‘eternity’ and where the past exists alongside the present. In this sense, Đorđević creates the cinematic space which contains historical, ontological, and eschatological realities.

Conclusions

*In a certain sense the past is far more real, or at any rate more stable, more resilient than the present. The present slips and vanishes like sand between the fingers, acquiring material weight, only in its recollection.* --Andrei Tarkovsky

If understanding the past through film is perhaps one of the keenest challenges for scholars, then the development of new approaches and research methods in the historical research of film is crucial for the advancement of scientific inquiry. By applying frame as a critical method of analysis in studying the documentary films by pioneers Josip Karaman, Đorđe Bogdanović, Svetozar Botorić, and Miodrag Đorđević, this paper aimed to shed light on the role of religion and film in the Balkan Peninsula at the turn of the century, and the contributions of forgotten pioneers to the development of film language as a distinct form of historical evidence between the silent and the sound eras. Film language is at the heart of this study: formal innovations by the early film pioneers and their artistic approaches to the subject provide new perspectives on the role of religion in everyday life and its inseparability from the history of the Yugoslav space. It is through film language that we can understand the concept of the world the filmmakers had and the life and diverse people who played a role in that life, as well as what religion meant for them, in both historically turbulent and in peaceful times.
In this paper I argued that the understanding of film language is necessary for our reading of the past and the historical content of which religion is an integral part. I proposed frame as the method of critical analysis as it enables a more focused study of film language. By frame I specifically referred to the ways in which content is arranged and presented through the means of film language: mise-en-scène, camerawork, montage, intertitles and/or sound. Frame as a method of analysis facilitates reading historical content and the examination of the relationship between on-screen and off-screen spaces within film which in turn provides us with unique insight into the worldview of the filmmakers and the context of their time. By looking at the cinematic space, I analysed who and what is represented, and how that which is represented transcends realities in-front and behind the camera.

This is the first study to offer an analysis of the early films produced in the Yugoslav space and the innovative use of film language by the early film pioneers in communicating the reality around them. The early film pioneers discussed in this paper offered a new sense of the real by integrating geographical and physical spaces into the cinematic space in an innovative way, which in itself represents a pioneering attempt in conveying realism in film. Bound to the geography of the land, they capture the first environmental events in film, where the stasis and movement of nature (and the camera) indicate the change and movement of everyday life. The atmosphere, or rather the aesthetics of the ‘timeless time’ is conveyed in the depictions of the sacred on the reel, be it religious ceremonies, religious objects, or even the monuments. For instance, as discussed in the case of representations of the unveiling of the monuments, what appears as a still image of an object that is connected to the past is often contrasted with the people of the present. The filmmakers compose the shot to communicate the sacred aspect of the event where the past is not dead but merges with the present through the sacred act (of the blessing), depicted by the means of film language, thus creating a space of (liturgical) memory. The ontological aspect of memory is conveyed through film language, a rather poetic composition in itself innovative for its time, which transmits several realities that are not mutually exclusive but exist alongside one another: the present, the past (the memory of the past embodied in an object—a monument), individual realities such as that of the filmmakers and their experience of the event, and their conceptualisation of the sacred, specific for its time and place.
Thus the filmmakers achieve an ‘unbroken space-time’ through the camera movements, usually without montage, framing the subjects in juxtaposition to the environment and bringing in intimacy by shifting the focus from one figure to another, which altogether communicates the sense of the unbroken links between the people sharing the same space.

Through the fragments of the geographical spaces that exist beyond the frame introducing off-screen reality(ies), the camera further depicts specific physical spaces and the persons and groups tied to those spaces. The geographical spaces are very important to the films, and landscapes have multiple functions: they are related to the past and memory, and they indicate that which is beyond the details shown on the screen. In this way, the off-screen present has a transformative dimension. The backdrop of the landscape, for instance, communicates the off-screen space as a space of worship, while in other cases it conveys the contemplated historical past that reveals itself in the present. The transformations of the cities, people, and historical circumstances are contemplated through the movement of the rivers and the ice which while in themselves they are recordings of natural phenomena, when integrated into the story they become a poetic, transformative image of the world around them. The geography of the landscape ‘frames’ the land, as the camera frames the landscape, signifying ‘the home’ as a unique, intimate, broad, and specific space composed from different microcosmic realities.

Cinematic space is not an alternative worldview, but a factual worldview, which must be considered and examined as such. Following in Robert Rosenstone’s footsteps who argued that film should be treated and validated in the same way as the historical text, I proposed the analysis of film language as one of the crucial methods for studying film. Rosenstone criticised the rooted understandings that written history is the only valid history, which as such determines the relationship of past to present. The unique capacity of film lies in its ability to express history in its own language, communicating and bringing together the relationship between past and present. Film, as I proposed in this paper, should be used as a primary source in historical research.

The body of films produced in the Yugoslav space in the turbulent historical periods from 1896 to 1939 contain rich material on religion, including the first cinematic contemplations on faith.
The films discussed in this paper integrate religion into historical narratives. In depicting religion, the filmmakers employed innovative techniques such as deep focus, developed as early as 1913, panning shots to connect the different spaces, people, and objects, and the long tracking shots that convey the wholeness of the space. The films are created as a mosaic composed of small and unexpected details (conveyed through the informal approach to the formal events) that in turn provide a richer sense of reality. The shifts from close-ups to wide shots, inclusion of the bird-eye perspective, and panorama contrasted to the people represented, produce aesthetics that corresponds to the dynamics of life. The filmmakers strive to compose the cinematic as the space of truth-telling and to find a more poetic approach to objective reality.

In filming the sacred, filmmakers often capture dynamic and unexpected moments, finding creative solutions for them. In Karaman’s *Procession of St Duje* it is the surrounding, the everydayness of life that ‘frames’ the sacred, while in *Return of the Serbian Victors* the sacred is the overarching umbrella for the events in which past and present meet. In *Oath of the Vardar Regiment Soldiers* the continuity of space achieved through the panning shots and uninterrupted camera movement, best exemplified in the gradual shift from Rabbi Isak Alkalaj to King Aleksandar I Karadžorđević, creates the sense of an ‘unbroken space,’ that is, of the links and unity at the brink of the Great War. Through the depiction of the ceremony of the blessing and the camera’s focus on the act of the blessing, the unbroken space appears as enveloped in the sacred. Furthermore, the way the directors frame the subjects, the Rabbi and the King, and the symmetry in their positioning during the sacred ritual indicates their equality in life and death, which brings the ontological dimension into film. In between them stands the table that appears as a form of ‘altar’ which serves as a crossing and a meeting point between the two prominent figures. Similarly, the Mostar Bridge (*Under the Yugoslav Skies*) serves as the physical connection in the geographically divided area whose unity is visually established by the panning shot. Geographical and physical spaces in the films serve to connect people and spaces, communicating the off-screen spaces and the complexity of the microcosmic realities which lie beyond the camera-eye.
The film *Under the Yugoslav Skies*, the first feature-length documentary and sound film of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, emerges as a contemplation on the new geo-political and cultural space that developed with the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, renamed into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. Although the film is also the first travelogue, the director Miodrag Mika Đorđević uses the film as the space for contemplation exploring nature in its stillness and diversity, spaces of prayer, cities and villages, and the people of diverse faiths and their customs. His film transmits the diversity of the space(s), geographical and physical, through the cinematic space. The film predicated around a journey bears many layers of meaning: the young state is explored through the concept of ‘home’ where faith is contemplated without exposition and expressed poetically through the actions of people and the lightness of nature. The filmmaker however strives for the factual reality, where physicality (people, objects) and geography (of the landscape) are not used as symbols but represent what they really are. It is precisely in this process that the objects and spaces become images, and it is in the ‘everydayness’ of life that the ontological is transcended. The film reveals important segments of the local history, the whole societal tapestry of the Yugoslav space which could be easily overlooked in the written history. The seemingly fragmented stories reveal the microcosmic realities of the new state which is portrayed as a country whose richness lies in its diversity. The early filmmakers approached film as the new art which required a different form of narration. Cinema, especially in the early beginnings, was an independent endeavour. This enabled the early film pioneers to think freely about the ways in which reality can be expressed by the means of film language. The cinematic space, approached as a ‘free space,’ needed to be occupied and de-occupied, remaining what it is: an authentic event in time. The cinematic space seen as the space where reality and time can be captured by the artists freely, needed to be liberated from artificiality in order to become an event produced by an authentic act and captured by the apparatus. Although the apparatus involves repetition (a film can be played time and again in the cinema), it will remain an authentic event in time, always anew for its audience. The early films of the Yugoslav space remain some of the most exquisite poetic and historical documents for scientists of diverse disciplines, but also are documents that need to be read through their own language.
Local filmmakers who lived and created in this region were of different ethnic and national backgrounds. For instance, one of the most important documentarists is Aleksandar Lifka who was of Czech decent, born in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and who later received Yugoslav citizenship. Editors Anthology, Lifka i Lifke (Beograd: Jugoslovenska Kinoteka, 2011).

Yugoslavia became the name of the state in 1929 but film societies and production companies used the name by 1918.


Ludvigsson, 84.


Rosenstone, “The Historical Film as Real History,” 1-2.

Robert A. Rosenstone, History on Film/Film on History (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2012).

Although historians “preferred words on a page to be “real” history for a couple of millennia…what they haven’t investigated, or summarily rejected is the idea that each form of telling the past can have its own historical integrity.” Rosenstone, History on Film/Film on History.

Rosenstone, “The Historical Film as Real History”, 6.


Paraphrased. Nichols further argues that it is the form that achieves the goal of representing the important subject to the viewer. Nichols, x.


For the implicit and explicit links between institutional religions and film industry policies, the relationship that shifted from collaboration to censorship during the silent era, see Terry Lindvall, The Silents Of God: Selected Issues & Documents In Silent American Film & Religion, 1908-1925 (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001).


This refers not only to the wider historical context but to the conditions in which they are filming: what we see in the cinematic space can often be a product of the moment in which they are filming rather than a result of their artistic expression. See Nichols.

In the case of ‘deep focus’ it means introducing a distinctly filmic approach to the formal representation of subjects at a time when filmmakers’ approaches in many countries still drew heavily on older media such as theatre. It also means achieving a standard of ‘Welles before Welles’, namely, pioneering a technique as early as twenty to thirty years before that technique would become well-known and associated with the director of Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941).

The Lumière Brothers employed representatives to showcase films around the world (they did the same with cameramen whom they sent to shoot films). André Carre presented the first screening in Belgrade, and he would go on to shoot the first films of the city in 1897. Stevan Jovičić, “The Cinema in Serbia 1896-1941”, translated by Mina Radović, Studies in Eastern European Cinema 10, no. 3 (2019), 288-300 (290).

The Coronation of King Peter I of Serbia (Крунисање краља Петра I Карађорђевића и Путовање кроз Србију, Нова Пазар, Црну Гору и Далмацију) (1904) was filmed by Arnold Muir Wilson, the honorary Serbian consul in Sheffield who was invited to the coronation ceremony and who brought with him cinematographer Frank Mottershaw.

The Principality of Serbia (1825) and the Kingdom of Serbia (1878); The proclamation of the Kingdom of Montenegro in 1910 was a historical event recorded by the camera.

According to Kosanović, “the field of culture played a big role” in bringing the South Slavs and other Yugoslav people together. Kosanović draws attention to the “Literary agreement on a common language (1850 created by Ivan Mažuranić, Ivan Kukuljević, Dimitrije Demeter, Vuk Karadžić, Franjo Miklošić, Đura Daničić) and cooperation between leading Yugoslav intellectuals in the field of literature, journalism, theater and the like. In Serbia, which was the first to gain complete independence (1867), the basis for the creation of a common state was Načertanije, a program of Serbian foreign policy written in 1844 by Ilija Garašanin, and later supported by Prince Mihailo Obrenović.” Kosanović reminds that it was written then that “the collapse of the Austrian and Ottoman empires…will lead to the creation of a joint state with other Yugoslav nations.” My translation. Dejan Kosanović, Kinematografija i Film u Kraljevini SHS/Kraljevini Jugoslaviji 1918-1941 (Beograd: Filmski Centar Srbije, 2011), 11.

The film captures the arrival of the Russian fleet, and the important guests the Grand-Duke Nikolai Romanov, King Vittorio Emanuel, Count Franz Batenberg and the Serbian Crown Prince Aleksandar, Montenegrin King Nikola’s grandson. The camera moves onto the veterans from 1860, and the people in the national costumes, as well as the present citizens.

Kosanović, 17.

Kosanović.

Kosanović, 20.


Some production companies like ‘Croatia Film’ changed their name to ‘Jugoslavija Film’ following unification. However, pioneers like Ernest Bošnjak, Josip Novak, Kosta Novaković, and Rodoljub Malenčić operated independently, often out of their self-run companies and self-established laboratories.

By the Pericle’s era the author refers to a golden age of cinematography. See Bosa Slijepčević, Kinematografija u Srbiji, Crnoj Gori, Bosni i Hercegovini 1896-1918 (Beograd: Institut za Film u Beogradu, 1982), 152.

My translation. Paraphrased, see Volk, 30.

Slijepčević, 152.

Slijepčević, 152.

Slijepević, 146-147.


This is the case with the early films about Sarajevo, or the French films about Belgrade which divide the city to the ‘European part’ and the ‘Ottoman part.’

However, it is important to note that the Manaki brothers in 1911 filmed The Grevena Church and The Funeral of Metropolitan Emilianos of Silyvria.

“...Its coast (Dalmatia and Istria) belonged to the Austrian part of the empire, while continental Croatia was in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy. The country had limited political sovereignty, represented by the Croatian ban (i.e., viceroy) and the Croatian parliament. It had internal autonomy and the right to use the Croatian language not only in local administration, but also in common institutions.”

Škrabalo.

Saint Domnius, born in Antioch, was a third-century Bishop of Salona (Σάλωνα) martyred in 304 during the persecutions of Christians by the Emperor Diocletian.

Duje is the local expression for Domnius. It is possibly Slavic appropriation of a Roman name expressed in the Dalmatian dialect. This was one of many dialects considered in Yugoslavia to be a part of the standard Serbo-Croatian or Croatian-Serbian language. It is useful to know that “in the 18th century, Dalmatia used Venetian Italian, Old-Štokavian and Čakavian as spoken languages and Latin, Tuscan Italian, Neo-Štokavian, and Church Slavonic as written languages. The scripts in use were Glagolitic, Cyrillic and Latin.” See Janja Dora Ivančić, “Language Situation in Dalmatia in the 18th century,” in Language and Society in the 18th Century South Eastern Europe / Sprache und Gesellschaft in Südosteuropa im 18. Jahrhundert, Yearbook of the Society for 18th Century Studies on South Eastern Europe 3, Daniela Haarmann and Konrad Petrovszky, eds. (2020), 85-100.

Škrabalo.

France, Italy, Romania, Greece, Germany.

Nichols.

Vožd Karadorđe Petrović led the First Serbian uprising in 1804 and is the founding father of the Royal House of Karadordević. [https://royalfamily.org/dinasty/history-of-the-dynasty/](https://royalfamily.org/dinasty/history-of-the-dynasty/)

This long tracking shot captures the banners with writings of the names of the liberated areas and towns, such as Kosovo and Kumanovo (See Figure 6). It is important to bear in mind that this is a different historical period and context, so that ‘meaning’ should not be read from today’s political perspectives but rather studied and analysed for what they represented and meant at the time when they were filmed.

Lieutenant Marinković belonged to the Šumadija division of the Serbian Army and was killed in the battle of Kiselica during the Second Balkan War.

Crown Prince Alexander Karadordević, Prime Minister Nikola Pašić, Minister of Defence Dušan Stefanović, commanders of divisions, generals, officers of the Belgrade garrison, cadets of the Military Academy, guests from Southern Serbia, as well as over fifteen thousand citizens of Belgrade. Source: Jugoslovenska Kinoteka, [https://vimeo.com/229790118](https://vimeo.com/229790118).

The films such as *Otkrivanje spomenika našim Jevrejima* (*Unveiling of the Monument of Our Jews*, 1927) further depict the relationship to the Jewish Community in Serbia, and Yugoslavia.


Slava is the Serbian custom of celebrating the patron Saint of the family. Traditionally it is the day on which the family ancestor was baptized, and it is passed from generation to generation. It is a commemoration of the living and the dead, and represents an image of the Eucharist (bread and wine). See Nikola Paković, “Slava ili kršno ime kod Srba,” *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* 63 (2015), 128.

Rosenstone, “The Historical Film as Real History”, 6.

The documentary was showcased in France and Czechoslovakia.

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**References**


