



# International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science

e-ISSN: 2544-9435

Scholarly Publisher  
RS Global Sp. z O.O.  
ISNI: 0000 0004 8495 2390

Dolna 17, Warsaw,  
Poland 00-773  
+48 226 0 227 03  
editorial\_office@rsglobal.pl

---

## ARTICLE TITLE

REPRESENTATION OF THE REALITY IN THE FIRST GEORGIAN DOCUMENTARY FILMS

---

## ARTICLE INFO

Lia Zambakhidze, Nino Chalaganidze. (2024) Representation of The Reality in The First Georgian Documentary Films. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 4(44). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.4(44).2024.2988

---

## DOI

[https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.4\(44\).2024.2988](https://doi.org/10.31435/ijitss.4(44).2024.2988)

---

## RECEIVED

13 October 2024

---

## ACCEPTED

10 December 2024

---

## PUBLISHED

13 December 2024

---

## LICENSE



The article is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License**.

---

© The author(s) 2024.

This article is published as open access under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), allowing the author to retain copyright. The CC BY 4.0 License permits the content to be copied, adapted, displayed, distributed, republished, or reused for any purpose, including adaptation and commercial use, as long as proper attribution is provided.

# REPRESENTATION OF THE REALITY IN THE FIRST GEORGIAN DOCUMENTARY FILMS

**Lia Zambakhidze**

Ph.D., Candidate of the Educational Program in Mass Communication, Caucasian International University  
0141, Tbilisi, Chargali Str. 73  
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6872-4238

**Nino Chalaganidze**

Ph. D. in Journalism, Professor, Caucasian International University  
0141, Tbilisi, Chargali Str. 73  
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4739-1876

---

## ABSTRACT

History of the Georgian cinema counts more than hundred years. In the beginning of the XX century several projecting halls had already started operation in Georgia. The local society upon appearance of the film making, in 1896, shared new directions of the art and if we will take a glance on dynamics of development, we can say boldly it got rather interested in it. During a definite period of time opportunities and impacts of new means of the mass communication became a subject of interests not only of authors, but public persons (actors) as well. The work over creation of the national film making was started. For the purpose of encouraging of patriotic moods, broadening of education and rising awareness among viewers, directors, writers and aristocracy of that period consolidated. It was just an attempt. After occupation happened in 1921 Georgian film making, as well as other fields of the art found themselves in the Soviet propagandistic pliers. The target of this thesis (work) is to represent dynamics of development of the Georgian film making, to analyze the cadres kept in the Georgian National Archive from the beginning of the XX century – till the occupation of 1921, to demonstrate the key features of the documentary film developed according to the political, social or economic processes and global trends, authors' achievements in the process of translation of the idea from the creative viewpoint.

---

## KEYWORDS

Documentary Film, Georgia, Mass Communication

---

## CITATION

Lia Zambakhidze, Nino Chalaganidze. (2024) Representation of The Reality in The First Georgian Documentary Films. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Social Science*. 4(44). doi: 10.31435/ijitss.4(44).2024.2988

---

## COPYRIGHT

© **The author(s) 2024**. This article is published as open access under the **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0)**, allowing the author to retain copyright. The CC BY 4.0 License permits the content to be copied, adapted, displayed, distributed, republished, or reused for any purpose, including adaptation and commercial use, as long as proper attribution is provided.

---

## Introduction.

„Noblemen's theater. Today, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, the cinema being so popular all over the world will be shown on the screen, alive photographic image of Lumiere. Beginning at 8 o'clock, a ticket cost is decreased". (Newspaper "Bulletin", 1896, 16<sup>th</sup> of November) – it is the first document reached up to this date which confirms the news of the first public presentation of alive pictures in Georgia.

“Alive means that the images are moving. This latter invention covered the whole Europe by Lumiere and everywhere it was widely approved by the society (Bulleting 16<sup>th</sup> of November, #28).

Prior to spreading of the Brothers Lumiere projection systems in Georgia, Davit and Aleksandre Dighmelovs, by means of the “Laterna Magicas” (the device created in the XVII) organized performance. In 1900s David Dighmelov, known under a pseudonym John Morris, broaded the scale of film performances in regions. Using the same program father and son travelled in Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Middle Asia. The Auditory had a chance to observe foreign documentary films and illustration of the “Night in the Panther's Skin” produced by the Hungarian artist Mikhail Zich.

In 1904 the first stationary cinema “Iluzioni” was opened in the building of the Restaurant “Datvi” (Bear) situated on the Golovin (the former Rustaveli) avenue. This startup of the Odessian businesswoman Sophia Ivanitskaia was followed with construction of the wooden building, under her management, in the Mushtaidi Park. The summer cinema designed for 150 viewers and having its own small power station hosted the most interested auditory. Since the year of 1907 the cinemas “Muza”, “Apollo”, “Cinema Disc” and others started their operation.

“Competition appeared – owners of cinemas, firms, foreign owners of rented spaces applied multiple ways for attraction of viewers” (Zhvania, 1990, page 7).

On top of the materials imported from abroad, cinemas suggested Georgian documentary plots. Multi-cadre moving images generally reflected life of the government and representatives of the political elite. For instance, Aleksandr Dighmelov reflected the following cadres illustrating local events in the “Iluzioni”: “Funeral of the Catholicos in Ichmiadzin”, “First Race in Tbilisi”. Sensational and exotic materials, such as flying by an airplane (cadres are not preserved), “Feast in the Ortachala Garden”, “Boxing of Kintos” and others were shown as well.

Despite of the fact, that the above-mentioned archive materials had not reached our times, titles approximately reflect themes of the materials and general directions of the author’s interest, such kind of a performance in that period had conditioned rising of the interest, that, in its turn, was reflected in the volume of the auditory and following that the rates of development of the Georgian film making.

### **Targets and Objections of The Research**

The present research is targeted at studying and representing of the tradition and significance of the Georgian documentary film making not only on the local, but on the world-wide level as well. To reach the stated target it is necessary to settle the following tasks:

- Reviewing of the created before and recently available theoretic materials of the Georgian documentary film making;
- Reviewing and analyzing of the video materials kept in the archive funds.

### **Methodology.**

To resolve the tasks set up in the process of the research, mainly to provide concurrent following of the process of creation and development of the documentary film in Georgia it is necessary to get acquainted with the secondary historic sources. The stated considers reviewing of concrete numbers of periodic issuances and the articles published in them kept in the library of the Georgian National Library. Mainly: “Bulletin”, “Soviet Art”, “Theater and Life”.

Content analysis of the film materials kept in the Georgian National Archive will provide us with the detailed information on content-related and audio-visual features of the Georgian documentary film making of different epochs; films analyzed according to the means of representation, technical characteristics and content, on top of the above-mentioned, will reveal the way of reflecting of the processes existing in the country in the authors’ film objectives, and following that the form of their delivery to the auditory.

### **Key Achievements.**

Appearing of the documentary film in Georgia is connected with the name of Vasil Amashukeli. The Director shot the first plot in Baku in 1908. Only names of the films reached our time, they are: “Parade in Baku for celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Taking of Gunibi”, “Discharging of the ship”, “Types of the Baku’s bazar”, “Promenade on the sea shore”, “Working in the oil well”, “Transportation of coal by camels”, “Competition in swimming” and others (Amirejibi, 1998).

Since 1910s Vasil Amashukeli continues shooting in Kutaisi. Plots reflecting the routine of the city were broadcasted in the cinema “Radium”. As like as the materials collected in Baku, the following plots had not reached our ages: “Kutaisi’s landscapes”, “Ruins of the Bagrati Church”, “Khoni Silk Plant” and others.

The first documentary cadres which are still kept in the Georgian National Archive show “the funeral of the Tbilisi Mayor Aleksandre Matinov”. Approximately two minutes video material was recorded in 1909. The film plot, majorly, covers general views, fragments of the ceremony, clerical funeral and the crowd going to the cemetery.

“Parade of the Georgian Ward in front of the Military Church is dated by 1910. The parade is received by the representative of the Tsar in the Caucasus, the Count Ilarion Vorontsov-Dashkov.” The material is dated by the 5<sup>th</sup> of October and as well as its processor represents translation of the current event. “Sanctification of

the bank bureau" (1910) in the third block of the current National Library represents approximately four-minutes video material. Funeral of the Social Actor and Founder of the Georgian Wine-making Davit Sarajishvili is shown in the chronicle recorded on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, 1911.

The following plots directed by Aleksandre Dighmelov saw the light in the cinemas of 1910: "Tbilisi Botanic Garden", "Borjomi Mineral Waters", "Mtsketa's Day", "Lado Meskhishvili's Anniversary" and others (Amirejibi, 1998).

Short-termed plot, named "Hunting on elks and boars in Karaizi and Evlakhi" (1912) is different from the above-mentioned ones in their form of expression and plot. The Aleksander Dighmelov's film is started with the titer where the author informs us that the material refers to the hunting of the Knyaz Nikoloz Mikhailovich on boars and elms. The first cadres represent how the groups of hunters are going to the forest. Later, the second part of the film is started with a titer "Breakfast", a picnic shown with one angle and view before starting hunting. The next moments reflect checking and preparing of guns. The title of the third fragment "Transportation of gunmen" shows their moving by boat on the river in groups. A feeling of continuity of the actions appears on a definite stage by logical replacing of far and near views, in panoramas. The next chapters are devoted to the collection of dogs, a number of killed and wounded animals. By the end of the film photo session of hunters is shown with a general view.

The first full length documentary film in Georgia and in the world was shot by Vasil Amashukeli in 1912. "As I am aware, till 1912, no full length documentary film (1200 meters) in any country had been devoted to any noble person" –George Sadoule, researcher of the world history of cinema (Zhvania, 1990, p.17) film negative is lost. Only the positive was saved and it reflects only the one third part of the film.

„Trip of the Georgian Poet Akaki Tsereteli to Racha-Lechkhumi in July, 21, - August, 2, 1912". Chronicle cadres of the film thoroughly reflect the activities. Each activity are separated from each other with titers. Akaki Tsereteli's portrait is imaged above the inscriptions made by vignette. "Leaving of Kutaisi at 7.00 a.m", "Breakfast in the Tsereteli's yard in Choma", "Trip to the village Dzimastaro", "Plan of the Sairme rocks", "Miracle of Nature", "Taking by Akaki Tsereteli of the tribune to read lections in the village Chrebalo on 22<sup>nd</sup> of July", "Akaki Tsereteli and his fellow travelers", "National Dance in Perkhuli near the village Ele in the yard of the house of heirs of the noble man Rostomi in Racha".

On top of general views which baldly reflect chronology of events in definite fragments a creative view and renovated approach of Vasil Amashukeli appear in definite fragments.

One of the examples of the montage shooting are "Plans of the Sairme's rocks", "Miracle of the Nature". In the given fragments authors illustrates a face of the poet and then the horizontal panorama reflecting views. Using this method, the viewer finds himself exactly in the moment being under observation of Akaki Tsereteli. To represent a picture in the film fully vertical panoramas are also applied.

Composition of some cadres is noteworthy. According to the preliminary reviewed schedule of Vasil Amashukeli the camera is placed exactly in the point of stopping of the carriage of the poet, to allow to the subject to be shot to take a central place in the cadre. Similar approach enables the operator to transform the general cadre of the crowds walking on the way into the average one gradually and to show to the viewers the personages with the focus desirable for the author. Compositive structure of the cadre is vivid in the materials recorded in Chrebalo as well. The poet taken on one's arms in the mass people is not shown with the general view, the cadre is being narrowed gradually and finally shows Akaki's emotions from the near position.

"The film represented one complete sketch made strictly according to the elementary principles of the dramaturgy that was very rare for that period". (Gogidze, 1950, p.18).

The full length documentary film for the first time was shown in Kutaisi, in the cinema "Radium". The debut was attended by Akaki Tseretei. Its following screening was carried in Tbilisi, Batumi, Zugdidi, Baku, Moscow, Istanbul. Imaginative part of the film, view characteristic for the author and reflection of events using similar cognitive means established new rules and approaches in documentary film making.

As of 1914, most of the authors were limited with translation of current events. The archive keeps "Filling of the foundation of the Tbilisi Polytechnical Institute" and "The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of occupation of the Caucasus in Sokhumi". The event organized on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May was attended by the Nikolay II, church priests and official bodies representing the Tsar.

It is remarkable that a writer Shalva Dadiani started thinking about national film making in Georgia in 1911.

"The idea of foundation of the Georgian film making or "Kartulenti" created in my mind a long time ago. In 1911 conducted correspondence with foreign firms, then I shared that idea with some social actors... Unfortunately, no practical step due to the private sharing was made (Dadiani, 1917).

The author in his report defines the following directions: scientific, ethnographic, and historical. Thoroughly scheduled plots in each of them have an aim to represent culture, routine, and global essence of Georgia.

„We should use the assignment of it (film making) ideologically... It may turn into the weapon of direct propaganda in our society to strengthen our national idea inside and outside. We can say proudly that it may be used abroad solely instead of a newspaper, as its language is understandable, cosmopolitics for all”. (Dadiani, 1917).

Despite of the efforts, the national film making could hardly be created officially with the account of the situation existing in that period and social-political activity of the author of the idea.

Despite of the fact, that foreign plots were very popular among the Georgian auditory, the film was not recognized as a high art. “Georgian thinkers of that period did not recognize fully prospectless new technical inventions named as “the danger of the scene art”. Social noble man Ioseb Imedashvili was among them.

“What kind of images are disseminated among the people? All of them show foreign routine, nature and history, not-patriotic, often lacking content and, probably having a negative impact” (Imedashvili, 1915).

To resolve the problem, the author suggests to disseminators of literacy or the dramatic society among Georgian people to start shooting of the scenes about history and writing of Georgia by themselves. “I think that we do not need interpretation, this business should be won from the proprietary and ideological-conscientious viewpoint and let not suspend: the life is progressing and what should we wait for”. (Imedashvili, 1915).

As Guram Zhvania explains in his research, “sentimental-bloody dramas of a cheap taste” were actual in this period. Official warning existed and it banned “posting of evil images-slogans showing murders committed by means of inquisitive means or choking, killing, throwing under train” (Zhvania, 1990, p.29).

Georgian social actors in the given reality thoroughly acknowledged possible impacts and significance of such effects of the cinema. As an example, we can suggest an opinion of the social actor and charity provider Pavle Tumanishvili, who, in 1918, addressed to the Minister of Public Education: “We should avoid special cinematographic dramas, comedies, falsifying scenes. I offer only arrangement of the cinematography serving exclusively to the educational aims, mainly a kind of cinematography which will implement applied knowledge in the society.” (Zhvania, 1990, p.30).

Formation of the Georgian Independent Democratic Republic on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May, 1918 played an important role in the process of establishment of the national film making industry.

The documentary material recorded in the three-year period of independence represents translation of historical events. Chronicles of current events without definite author-related interpretation, duly and rather completely narrate about the processes happening in different fields. Film chronicles of 1918-1921 preserved visual materials reflecting social-political life: “Day of the Public Army in Tbilisi”, “Entering of Menshevik’s armies in Adjara”, “Independence Day of Georgia”, “Parade of members of the sport club “Shevardeni” on the Vake field”, “Arriving of the II International in Georgia”.

Well-known visual materials reflect promenades recorded on the Rustaveli avenue. We can see in cadres Noe Jordania and members of the Government of Georgia; people celebrate independence of the state. Each plot is divided by titers and describes current processes in details: “The Government of the Republic chaired by Noe Jordania in front of the Palace”, “Noe Jordania, accompanied with the Ministers greeted the Public Army on the Rustaveli avenue”, “Military Minister Gr. Giorgadze addresses with the speech to the Public Army”, “Guests arrived in the capital of Georgia”, “Thoma’s show – a member of the Parliament of England”, “Mrs Snowden”, “English-French socialist” and others.

The material of 1920 represents ceremonies of the two-year anniversary of independence, ceremonial parade, governmental feast and official supper.

The Portrait of the General of the Armed Forces of the Georgian Democratic Republic, Giorgi Kvinitadze was saved in the subject reflecting the parade devoted to the 150 years anniversary of the Aspindza Battle. In cadres one may see the Military Minister Grigol Lortkipanidze making a speech among participants of the ceremony.

We can say that it is the last film chronicle showing history of the independent Georgia. After strengthening of the Soviet government creative processes occurring in the state were put in the claws of the Party that, in its turn, considered censorship and compliance of definite interests of the archive materials.

## Conclusions

Roots of the Georgian documentary film (1908) stay behind the official birth of the cinema making (1895) only by a decade. Despite of this short-termed period, in fact, merely the Georgian author Vasil Amashukeli creates the first full length documentary film in the world about a trip of the Georgian Poet in

Racha-Lechkhumi. The tapes kept in the Georgian National Archive vividly show attempts and desires, on top of the images imported to the viewer from abroad, to represent the local film chronicles.

Based on the content analysis the film chronicles shoot in 1908-1921, with their visual features, technics of montage recording and in some cases continuity of the reflected actions (“Hunting on boars and elms in Karaizi an Evlakhi”) created a solid basis for developing of the documentary film in the state.

Creative attitude of authors and readiness of social actors regarding formation of the national film making seemed to give a strong impulse to the dynamics of the activity successfully started in the state. However, the occupation of 1921 had abruptly hindered rates of development. Documentary film making was transformed into the propagandistic weapon of the Ruling Party. Nevertheless, despite of the ideological restrictions and censorship established as a result of sovietization, authors were making attempts to find efficient ways, forms and means of representation of the idea to the auditory.

#### REFERENCES

1. N. Amirejibi (1998). From cinema making to the film making art. Tbilisi: Education.
2. K. Gogidze (1950). Stories from the history of the Georgian film making. Tbilisi: Art.
3. Sh. Dadiani (1917). Georgian cinematography or “Kartulenta”. Soviet Art 1970, 7, 47-48.
4. Imedashvili (1915, May 23). The life is progressing. Theater and Life, 1-2.
5. G. Zhvania (1990). Georgian documentary film 1910-1970. Tbilisi: Art.