

## BALKAN CINEMA VERSUS CINEMA OF THE BALKAN NATIONS

### 2. Manakia Bros: Pioneers of Balkan Cinema, Claimed by Six Nations

In Romania's capital we found out that in France and England they sell cameras rendering "living" photos. Ienache already could not get rid of the desire to return to Bitola with a shooting camera. Even in his sleep was longing for it. While I returned home, he went to London where he purchased a Bioscope camera.

Milton Manakia

The Vlach (Aromanian) brothers Ienache and Miltiade Manakia represent the most eloquent example of filmmakers that belong to the Balkan cultural heritage as the attempt to establish their affiliation to one or another national cinema is foredoomed to failure. They are considered as the first Balkan filmmakers as they had shot several important films for no less than six Balkan nations. Also for the impressive number of photos they made and mainly for their importance they remain as the most important photographers in the Balkans. Ienache had a photographic activity of at least 41 years while Milton of 65 years, quite impossible to match with. They also shot films between 1907-1912 and owned an open cinema and a cinema theatre between 1921-1939. Unfortunately their work is almost unknown in Romania and although they considered themselves as Romanians, Yugoslavia, Greece, R.Macedonia, Turkey and Albania have been claiming them in the last decades.

Ienache (Ion, Ianakis), the elder brother (1878-1954) and Milton (Miltiade), the younger one (1882-1964), were born in nowadays Northern Greece at Avdella in the Pindus Mountains, a region that until 1912 was part of the Ottoman Empire. The two brothers began to work together in 1898. Ienache had opened a photo studio at Yoannina, in Epirus, where he worked also as a teacher for calligraphy and drawing at the Romanian gymnasium. They had to leave Yoannina in 1905 after Ienache had been involved in a scandal at Vouvousa (Băiasa) when the Hellenophile Vlachs disturbed the first Easter sermon in Romanian for the Vlachs. In 1905 the village Avdella, the birthplace of the two brothers, was entirely burnt down while the priest and two other inhabitants were killed by the Greek Antartes in order to punish the pro-Romanian attitude of the inhabitants. In 1905 the two brothers at Bitola (Monastir), in Macedonia where they opened together the "Studio for Art and Photography" which later became famous. Ienache continued his career as a teacher at the local Romanian gymnasium until 1916 when the Serbian authorities closed the "foreign schools", as Bitola had become part of Serbia. In 1905, with the occasion of their first journey to Istanbul they could make photos to several officials, including the future sultan Mehmed Reshad V (1909-1918). The participation at the 1906 International Exhibition in Bucharest brought to Manakia brothers not only two golden and one silver medal for photographic skills but also other opportunities. They became official photographers of the Romanian Royal Court in 1906, of the Turkish sultan in 1911 and of Serbian king Alexander Karageorgević in 1929. Also in 1906, after a visit to Peleş Castle, Ienache received a grant from Carol I and he could travel to Vienna, Paris and London. Milton recollected that during this trip Ienache purchased the Bioscope camera no.300 from Charles Urban & Co. A financial success followed so that the two brothers began to shoot films and even to make photos from pure artistic and scientific interest. Thus, during the next one they made their first film, *Domestic Life with the Vlach Women in the Pindus/ Viața casnică la*

*aromânele din Pind* in Avdella, when they immortalized their centennial grandmother spinning wool together with her daughters and granddaughters. A modest beginning seeming to keep in time a family scene but also was announcing through its title the later genuine epoch and ethnographic documents. And what an epoch: the anti- Ottoman uprisings on St.Ilya Day, the Young Turk Revolution, the Balkan and world wars that lead to Macedonia's division, the Vlachs' decline and the consolidation of the Balkan nations...

Not only their artistic career, but also their life has been deeply influenced by the stormy changes in the Balkan Peninsula. During WW1 their studio was destroyed and the occupation Bulgarian authorities sent Ienache in a prison camp in Plovdiv. The reason was that they had found some photos with military objectives and weapons in the house. Ienache fitted out a new studio in Plovdiv and continued to work there between 1917- 1918. In 1921, after the activity of the Romanian gymnasium had been suspended, the two brothers opened an open cinema and in 1923 they built their own cinema theatre with 574 seats but they could not enjoy it too much as the economic recession could be felt and they had to mortgage it and finally to lose it after a fire in 1939. For this reason they had to part in 1939 or 1943. Milton stayed in Bitola and kept the studio while Ienache moved to Thessalonica in order to teach and the local Romanian commercial high-school. The two brothers could not see each other anymore as WW2 followed, the civil war in Greece, as well as the cold war. Milton had become a citizen of communist Yugoslavia while Ienache a Greek citizen. Milton continued to make photos until 1963 (with one year before his death he had photographed the effects of the earthquake!) and enjoyed a tardy recognition. He received an award and a film was dedicated to him during his life (*Camera 300*, 1958, d. Branko Ranitović), as well as a stamp immediately after his death. Ienache closed his eyes forever after a brain hemorrhage with a feeling of being useless after his forced pensioning after the Romanian schools were closed and after the death of his only son.

Ienache and Milton Manakia are generally regarded as “the pioneers of Balkan cinema” or “the first local filmmakers in the Balkans”. This pioneering is referring to the number, diversity and importance of their films and this is why they could be considered as filmmakers. We cannot invoke too much against such characterization their dilettante impulse or their self- education as cinema in its first decades relied on filmmakers originating in photographers and cartoonists but moreover the fact that until 2007 we did not know about the screening of their films. When being questioned, even Milton asserted that they have never shown their own films although they were owners of a cinema theatre. In 2007 Boris Nonevski found out that they screened films in 1911 at Skopje. The Italian Carlo Vaccaro had opened in 1909 at Skopje the cinema theatre Excelsior, equipped with a Bioscope. In a leaflet about his screenings on 3- 6 of August 1911 Vaccaro announced in Turkish (with Arab characters), Bulgarian, Serbian and French the projection of several films among which *The Revolution in Constantinople. The Victory of the Young Turks/ La Revolution a Constantinople. La Victoire des Jeunes Turcs, Sultan Mehmed Reshad V Voyage to Thessalonica/ Voyage du Sultan Mehmet V. a Salonique and Sultan Mehmed Reshad V's Return from His Journey to Roumelia/ Le Retour du Sultan Mehmet V. du Voyage en Roumelie*. In fact it is about three films made by Manakia brothers during the same year that were of interest for the entire Ottoman subjects that time. Only adding “in Constantinople” in the title of the first film is inexact and represents probably an exaggeration for advertising purposes. However, there are clues about possible projections of their films also in Romania at least for scientific purposes. Even if they had not been the first locals to shoot films in the Balkans<sup>1</sup> they can be regarded as “the first Balkan filmmakers” as their activity has been constant and longer than the one of their predecessors who had made films just occasionally. A definitive conclusion should be drawn on their merits and priorities in Balkan cinema and ethnographic films. Even if generally in R.Macedonia they are regarded as the “founders” of the local cinema sometimes someone returns to an objective outlook therefore for instance Ljubisha Georgijevski considers their cinematic work “an accidental discontinuity”<sup>2</sup> in Macedonia.

Manakia brothers could see in Bucharest for the first time not only moving pictures but also a Bioscope projector, such as the one of Caterina Schonberger. At the Bucharest Grand Exhibition in 1906 there were besides the pavilion of cinema which was including Petre Ganciu's "talking cinema" also stands with photo cameras and probably shooting cameras. Also Romanian filmmaker Aurel Petrescu used an Urban camera that he sold in 1927 to the other pioneer of the Romanian animation Marin Iorda, who considered it "an old camera... a real ancestor" but which he used the same year in order to shoot the first preserved Romanian cartoon, *Haplea*<sup>3</sup>. Ienache was in Bucharest on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1907 (according to the datum written on the albums donated to the Romanian Academy) so we can assume with enough reason that Manakia brothers shot films no earlier than the summer or fall of 1907.

The controversies regarding dating the first films and even the lack of some important biographic details such as the year when Manakia brothers parted (1935, 1939 or 1943) and even the errors or the fact that many important persons in their films were not identified are due to propagandistic excesses, the lateness in the research and to few attempts of changing information between researchers in Greece and in ex- Yugoslavia. They can be explained at a certain time but today are hard to accept. There is also another explanation. It is about ignoring Ienache for political and propagandistic reasons. The documents in Romania about Manakia brothers were also not studied by foreign researchers while the Romanian ones were probably not tempted by such a study in the communist period when studies on Romanians abroad or on the ones who had left the country were not encouraged. In fact, taking into account the studies and career of the two brothers and the fact that in at least four films the one using the camera was Ienache as Milton can be seen in the films, we can assert more Ienache's authorship on the films. Ignoring Ienache and underlining Milton's merits represent an unjust and irreverent act when somebody considers only the fact that the films were left to Milton.

When they opened in Yoannina their photo studio Ienache was 20 while Milton was 16 years old. Most of their films were made before 1911 towards the first Balkan war. Then Macedonia was divided and the Vlach community was forever split. We can understand why the two brothers could not make films afterwards. Most topics of their films were Vlach and they had a Romanian or a Macedonian perspective that could not be possible anymore. It is not mere coincidence that the films were rediscovered after WW2 first time in the Yugoslav federation, where they had proclaimed a Republic of Macedonia. On the other hand, in 1916 the Romanian schools in Serbia were closed so that it was natural for Ienache to start a business like showing films. He was 53 in 1931 when Ienache left for Thessalonica with his son. After a few years he started to work again as a teacher. He did not settle in Thessalonica because he felt himself Greek as suggests Christos Christodolou<sup>4</sup>, but because in Greece still existed Romanian schools where his son could learn and on his turn he could find a position as a teacher. We can assume with enough reason that Ienache left his work in Bitola from a noble impulse. He had always helped his younger brother by hosting in his own house and making him partner to his business and after the 1939 bankruptcy he left his studio to the younger brother recently married. After the death of his wife (1935) he left for Thessalonica in order to live together with his son and hoped he could sustain both again from teaching.

The 40 films preserved identified images from six places of historical Macedonia: Avdella, Grevena, Veria (Castoria), Thessalonica (nowadays in Greece), respectively Bitola and Resen (in R. Macedonia). By taking into account the period when they were shot even the enumeration of the film titles indicates that we probably deal with some of the first ethnographic films in the world! Manakia brothers have intuited that the Vlachs' patriarchal way of life would soon be brutally changed by uprisings and four wars during 40 years. They left us moving images of the Sarakachens' (nomad Vlachs) transhumance with unique frames of caravans where horses wear pack-saddle loads, of the occupations such as sheep breeding and wool processing, of some religious feasts such as All Souls Day, Saint George (when the shepherds bring their herds to the mountains) and Epiphany, dances, funerals and weddings. Considering their entire work their

impulse was patriotic but also even scientific as thousands of their photos, as well as 11 films, have titles and explanations indicating a certain ethnographic preoccupation. Milton's modest testimony, reproduced by Dimitar Dimitrovski-Takets, confirms such a thing: "Within our family besides my grandmother and the other housewives we shot at first with Camera 300 how they were making carpets and quilts. We began in a chronological way: from shearing, washing, spinning, dying and weaving the wool up to the wedding ceremonies when the wife gives to her chosen one handmade artifacts or to the moment when the townsman bargains at the market for the beautiful carpet. If I filmed now the whole thing I would include it in 30 meters of film. But at that time I was wasting several reels, that is several times 30 meters."<sup>5</sup> Journalist Vasile Tega's opinion that among Manakia brothers' films are some representing "the first ethnographic films in the world"<sup>6</sup> at first I have considered it risky but now it does not seem exaggerate to me. In this respect a comparison with Robert Flaherty's films is useful. The unprecedented success of Flaherty's films was due to financing his expedition by two brothers trading furs in the boreal region, to the exoticism of their topics and above all to the advantage of having them released in America. *Nanook of the North* was distributed by Pathé in 1922 although had been made much earlier (1910-1920)<sup>7</sup>. Most of Manakia brothers' films were made between 1906-1911, before or about the same time with *Nanook*. Three of their films of general interest have been screened in 1911. Many of their photos with ethnographic contents were sold to the Romanian Academy. Therefore we can assume that also films like *Scenes from the Life of Vlachs in the Pindus* and *A Trip to Turkish Macedonia* have been purchased by the Romanian Academy and shown in Bucharest at least to ethnologists. On the other hand, although Manakia brothers owned a cinema theatre for 19 years (between 1921- 1939) it is possible that they hesitated to show to the townspeople of Bitola aspects of the "backward" life of the Vlachs, in fact a minority. Like the photos, such films could be appreciated in Bucharest in scientific circles. Milton asserted that they have never shown their films in Macedonia and even that between 1912- 1944 they had them buried as they had shot them during the Ottoman occupation and could be considered inconvenient by the Serbian authorities. On his turn, Flaherty was an American and the topics of his films were interesting for the audience worldwide. Thus we can explain why Flaherty has become famous during his life while Manakia brothers and their films have been ignored for a long time.

We have clues of some possible projections with scientific purposes, as two films seem that were edited for the Romanian Academy before 1913. The Romanian Academy and later on the Romanian Social Institute had constant preoccupations in making ethnographic studies, inclusively by means of photography (Theodor Capidan's "The Nomadic Romanians. A Study in the Life of Romanians of the South Balkan Peninsula"/ "Românii nomazi. Studiu din viața românilor din sudul Peninsulei Balcanice" in 1926 and Tache Papahagi's "Images d'ethnographie roumaine, dacoroumaine et aroumaine" in 1928- 1934, which included Ienache's photos as well as other works).

Six reels of a Manakia brothers' film with a total length of 160 meters are preserved in the collection of the Romanian Film Archive under the title *Scenes from the Life of the Vlachs in the Pindus/ Scene din viața aromânilor din Pind*. They consist of five episodes with the titles *A Scene of Feast at a Vlach Fair/ O scenă de petrecere la un bâlcu aromânesc*, *The National Circle Dance with the Vlachs in the Pindus/ Hora națională la aromânii din Pind*, *Epiphany with the Vlachs in Veria/ Serbarea Bobotezei la aromânii din Veria*, *A Scene from the Primary Vlach Education in Avdella Village from Epirus/ O scenă din învățământul primar aromânesc. Comuna Abella. Epir* and *Domestic Life with the Vlach Women in the Pindus/ Viața casnică la aromânele din Pind*. The inserts in literary Romanian even with Latin tendencies indicate the titles of the episodes (edited reels), the authors ("Ion and Milton Manachi"), as well as the studio ("Pindo- Balkan Film-Bitola"). It is important mainly the fact that the inserts indicate the episodes, which originate in older footage. Therefore we can conclude that Manakia brothers themselves prepared them for the Romanian audience. The other film preserved in Romania, *A Trip to Turkish Macedonia/ Excursie în Macedonia turcească* (168 meters), represents also an edited material, shorter than all the reels

shot on the occasion of Istrati's visit and kept in Milton's collection. The inserts, for instance the second one- *Greeting the Excursionists in Union and Progress Park by the Turkish Authorities and by the Christian Communities in Bitola/ Primirea excursioniștilor în Parcul Uniune și progres de către autoritățile turcești și comunitățile creștine din Bitolia* keep the same expressions as Istrati's academic reports in 1911 and even the title includes an official name, acceptable for the Turkish authorities ("Turkish Macedonia"), also used by Istrati. We can assume that also this film has been made at Istrati's request or at least has been purchased later and shipped to the Romanian Academy same as the albums of photos signed and left by Ienache. The name "Turkish Macedonia" could have been used until the end of the second Balkan war; therefore the film could have been edited and screened until 1913. Another clue indicating that they screened Manakia films is the advertisements published by the two brothers between 1908- 1912 in three periodical issues in Thessalonika and Bucharest<sup>8</sup>.

The advertisements are not identical. In *Dreptatea* the text indicates: "specialized in European centers Vienna, Paris, London and Berlin", as well as details about the photographic offer: "Plano type, naturally magnified, black & white, color, semi- enameled photos, photos on cloth and metal (zincography etc.). Correspondence in all languages. Moderate prices. Branches: Yoannina (Epirus) and Grevena (Pindus Mountains)". We have to mention that in *Lilicea Pindului* George Murnu and Marcu Beza published articles while Manakia brothers published four photos, inclusively the one with their grandmother Despina spinning wool together with other four women. Its explanation is "Photo by Manakia brothers, Bitola". The fact that Manakia brothers were known also as filmmakers and even maybe that their advertising had effect is confirmed by Mihai Zega's witness. He remembered that the chocolate manufacturer Petar Geras hired Milton to shoot his wedding and paid with a check. Milton and his assistant developed the film and found out that the negative had resisted to the transport by motorcycle so that their job was successful. Unfortunately, Manakia brothers did not keep the film and even the negative they handed to Gheras<sup>9</sup>.

In an attempt to find Manakia brothers' place in the Romanian cinema we can simply assert that their activity represented a moment of blessed exception. However, taking into account their photographic work that was quite appreciated and known, inclusively in academic circles, we can assume that also their films were known although we do not have records about their projections. On the other hand, if we consider a possible influence or even establishing a tradition, at least one meeting with cameraman Ion Voinescu is certain. We cannot be sure that Voinescu (also rewarded at the 1906 exhibition) and Manakia brothers met at the awarding ceremony but we are sure that in 1911 they spent several days together. Voinescu has been traveling for 20 days as photographer accompanying the Romanian delegation led by C.I.Istrati in Macedonia while Manakia brothers shot their trip at least from Bitola to Resen. The impact must have been powerful. Voinescu could receive explanations in Romanian from the two brothers who were making moving pictures. On his return Voinescu published together with François Lebrun (also member of Istrati's delegation) an album of photos called "Macedonia" and only two years later began to shoot: *The Operation of the Romanian Army in Bulgaria/ Operațiunea armatei române în Bulgaria*, in June 1913<sup>10</sup>. If we consider filmmaking at least at its beginning as a non- autonomous phenomenon which was still looking for its means and people in other crafts we shall find that the beginnings of Romanian cinema are not so discontinuous and accidental and even that Manakia brothers completely justify to be connected with the Romanian culture.

Scientist C.I. Istrati (1850-1918) has been several times minister (1899- 1917). He has been also mayor of Bucharest (1913), vice- president of the Romanian Academy between 1907- 1913 and its president between 1913- 1916. As a professor at the School for Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest, together with Victor Babeș, recommended for scholarships in Paris the future neurologist Gheorghe Marinescu (1863- 1938) and biologist Constantin Levaditti (1874- 1953)<sup>11</sup>. Istrati had probably been also the one that after knowing Manakia brothers filmmaking recommended or even requested to purchase their films by the Romanian Academy. We can conclude that C.I. Istrati has been encouraging not one, but four people that later had important

contributions to the beginnings of the Romanian cinema. Is it just an accident? Let us be honest: is it more relevant for early Romanian cinema a piece of news about some screening of a film in front of a hundred spectators than winning a supporter like Istrati, an academician since 1899 and minister between 1899- 1917? A cinematic continuity is not a guarantee of achieving works of art, as it would contradict the unique and individual character of creation. Likewise, following exclusively a tradition in cinema is often unfruitful, as it does not explain the emergence of some remarkable filmmakers often proceeding from outside cinema. And if we refer mainly to the documentary value of some films the discussion becomes superfluous.

Like the photos, the films have an inestimable value of historical documents. The visits in Macedonia of the sovereigns of Greece, Serbia and Turkey, of ministers Nikola Pasić and Dr. C. I. Istrati, as well as events in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are preserved only in the moving pictures of two Vlach photographers, ignored until 1958! And if we take into account that during the period 1906- 1911 they shot Turkish reprisals on their townspeople in Bitola when most of the military operations were shot in studios, we can realize that Manakia brothers were not shooting films only with dilettante pleasure but were conscious that were leaving unique historical records. In this respect we have to mention that two less known films, *Demonstrations/ Manifestații* (1908-1909) and *Burial of Bishop Emilianos of Grevena/ Înmormântarea episcopului Emilianos din Grevena* (1911), have Greek inserts which indicates that they might sold them in Greece. They did not live a peaceful epoch, favorable to artistic creation, but one when any activity could have been considered hostile by the authorities or by one of the six ethnic communities in Bitola. As Vlachs considering themselves Romanians they did not have the support of any political authority, but only of a minor community and only during peacetime of a Romanian consul. It was not accidental that Ienache had to suffer from the Bulgarian occupation authorities and the Greek nationalists disparaged him until his death. We should mention that their only films about which we know that have been ordered and paid for were those on weddings of their conationals. We know about three such films: the weddings of Hagi Gogu of Veria, Petre Geras of Bitolia and Risto Zerdevski (a friend and business partner) at Prilep. It is possible that such films also to have been screened in Macedonia.

Their activity of film distributors is also praiseworthy. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1921 they opened a cinema garden in Bitola in partnership with Dimitar Georgijevski and Costa (Tașcu) Ciomu, another Vlach who had inaugurated together with his brother Dimitrie the regular screenings in Bitola in 1909. But the two brothers were not contented with that. In the fall of 1922 they used the heritage they got after their father's death (at the beginning of 1920) to buy a plot a land of 889 square meters on Širok Sokak (The Main Street), not far away from the studio and their house. In order to finish the building of the cinema theatre they appealed to King Aleksandar Karageorgević's help and they received a loan with low interest. They had again as partners Costa Ciomu and Dimitar Georgijevski. In 1923 they inaugurated a cinema theatre with 373 seats at the pit and some other 200 in boxes and at the first floor. Between 1923-1935 in the repertoire were films like *Mayerling/ Tragoedie im Hause Habsburg* (1924, d. Alexander Korda), *A Sainted Devil* (1914, d. Joseph Henabery, starring Rudolf Valentino), *Lucrezia Borgia* (starring Lillian Hyde), the western *The Eagle* (1918, d. Elmer Clifton, starring Monroe Salisbury), *The Circus* (1928, starring Charles Chaplin), *Rin Tin Tin and His Owner and Friend, Mr. Lee Duncan* (1928) and *Ben Hur* (1907, d. Sidney Olcott)<sup>12</sup> According to Mihail Zega they also screened comedies starring Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton, as well as *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935, d. James Whale)<sup>13</sup>. Zega remembered that on the Easter of 1928 Manakia brothers had debts and in order to pay 7.000 dinars necessary for purchasing *Ben Hur* Milton had to borrow money. They advertised through printed posters as well as through improvisation of some scenes with actors playing some scenes. Mihail Zega remembered "for the film that for the *Lost Son* we put a Gypsy boy on horseback, we used drums and wrote on cloth. So we crossed the entire Bitola. It was a kind o living advertisement."<sup>14</sup> He also remembered an advertisement for which they hired drummers that were yelling in Serbian verses:

„Rin-Tin-Tin- najboli film  
Samo kod <Manaki>  
Zadovoljinje se svaki!”  
(Rin-Tin-Tin is the best film  
Only at <Manaki>  
We satisfy all!”<sup>15</sup>

One can estimate that they screened in the cinema theatre 1,500 moving pictures in its 15 years of existence<sup>16</sup>. In 1925 problems occurred as the partners retreated therefore in 1927 Manakia brothers remained unique owners but had to mortgage their movie theatre. After 1930 they rented the cinema theatre for 75,000 dinars per year to Riste Zerdevski from Prilep. On a Sunday night of 1939, during the screening of the French film *Marked Girls/ Prisons de femmes* (d. Roger Richebé), a fire destroyed the building. Zerdevski and the bank were insured so that only Manakia brothers had losses. Although they owned several assets with a total value of 1,190,000 dinars they could not get enough liquidity and consequently were declared bankrupt. That determined their ultimate separation. Milton kept the photo studio while Ienache, settled in Thessalonica at the end of 1935 in order to live together with his son, began to teach again in a Romanian school. The political events that followed hindered the two brothers from meeting again.

The Manakia brothers' films (40 titles and 1460 meters of negative flammable film) are preserved in the collection of the Cinematheque of Macedonia in Skopje but some of them can be found also in Bucharest while copies remained also in Belgrade. More than 1,000 photos are kept by the Library of the Romanian Academy and the Peasant's Museum, while some other thousands in private collections. The Romanian Film Archive preserves six of their films with a total length of 160 meters and edited under the title *Scenes from the Life of the Vlachs in the Pindus/ Scene din viața aromânilor din Pind*. The first episode is entitled *A Scene from A Vlach Fair in the Pindus/ O scenă de petrecere la un bâlcu aromânesc din Pind*. The first frames show a group of people descending an abrupt slope. Then children show up. The next images include priests and an orchestra while the camera moves to the right towards a group of children sitting and listening to the music. Milton shows up indicating his brother to shoot a fiddler playing the violin. The final images include women hand in hand and dancing a circle dance (“hora”). *The National Circle Dance of the Vlachs in the Pindus/ Hora națională la aromânii din Pind* represents a full description in images of three concentric circle dances involving 50 persons with the help of the camera placed on a hill in order to shoot panoramic images. The shooting shows in details a circle dance of men dressed in white, with foustanelas and fezzes while in the background one can see children that timidly try to imitate the adults dancing. The dancing men go round the women and girls dressed in dark clothes that dance in circle. Another scene shows a group of women with infants in their arms sitting on the grass. Another group of men dressed in dark clothes come in the foreground dancing hand in hand. One begins to distinguish women in the middle and men dressed in white in the background. The women come in the foreground. In the middle circle the women dance swinging while the ones in the exterior circle dance by moving one step to the left and two on the right. A close-up of men dressed in white and foustanelas follows. The camera descends so that one can distinguish the white socks and the peasant sandals of which some are adorned with tassels. In a close-shot the girls have their hair braided in pigtailed and wear pinafores of different colors and some gaze directly in the camera. *Epiphany with the Vlachs in Veria/ Serbarea Bobotezei la aromânii din Veria* begins with a scene of great effect shot in the small town Veria at a crossroad covered with snow. Lots of people arrive from two streets and their groups unite in front of us. We can distinguish religious banners. The next shot we can see a street going downhill followed by a narrow lane where the group of people clusters more. The crowd makes for the bridge, so does a horseman. Most of the people look at the ceremony on the banks of the river, another group from the bridge and from the high hill. In the shallow water we can see the priest dressed in white. Editing six shots filmed in different moments and from various angles, makes *A Scene from the Primary Vlach Education in Avdella Village from Epirus/ O scenă din învățământul primar*

*aromânesc. Comuna Abella. Epir.* A group of children accompanied by three teachers arrive under a tree. The teachers ask them to open the books. Two of the teachers leave and the children are delighted and begin to jump. The next shot shows a group of pupils standing; others sit on a long desk while a pupil on the left reads standing up. Two pupils get out of the desk on their knees while the teacher changes the page for him. Then in the foreground is a child dressed in foustanella that writes with a chalk on the blackboard. The next shot is of the pupils divided in three groups, leaned over the desk. In the right we can see a teacher with a rod in his hand. The second teacher shows up from the left also having a rod. The following images probably show the break as the pupils are alone, run and jump under the tree. The last images show the pupils standing and crossing themselves while a teacher shows up from the left also crossing oneself. *Domestic Life with the Vlach Women in the Pindus/ Viața casnică la aromâncele din Pind* begins with the image of eight women spinning wool. Other two show up. In the foreground is a old woman sitting (Manakia brothers's grandmother Despina), behind her there are other three girls standing, on the left one can partially see a woman bending while on the right two women are sitting. The camera moves left so one can see two other women in the left with a child in the background. The women in the left pull threads towards a big rotative tow attached to a wooden frame, the other women are rolling up the wool on balls while the old woman on a bobbin. The editing ends with the centenary grandmother Despina in the foreground, a shot originating in Manakia brothers' very first film. Despina is sitting and with her right hand unrolls wool from a bobbin while with the fingers of her left hand spins the thread.

*A Trip to Turkish Macedonia/ Excursie în Macedonia turcească* (1911) is preserved by the Romanian Film Archive. The exact dating, the route of the trip of the Romanian delegation and its composition through corroboration of the information from a series of Romanian periodical issues that unfortunately do not mention Manakia brothers or the filming. The visit had an official character as the group of scholars and jurists lead by ex- minister Dr. C.I. Istrati had come in Macedonia to check the situation of the Vlachs after they had obtained cultural rights through Hurryet (the sultan's decree regarding freedom of the nationalities in the Ottoman Empire) on the invitation of Theodor Capidan, that time headmaster of the Romanian high school in Bitola and later on an outstanding dialectologist. The composition of the delegation leads to the conclusion that the film includes unique moving images of some persons of consequence for the Romanian culture: geologist Gheorghe Murgoci, the founder of Astronomical Observatory in Bucharest admiral Gheorghe Urseanu, physicist and astronomer Nicolae Coculescu, archeologist Vasile Pârvan, literary historian Iosif Popovici, geologist and later mayor of Bucharest Emil Protopopescu- Pache etc. The 27 members of the delegation visited between 1<sup>st</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1911 Kumanovo, Prilep, Vărgăreli, Magarevo, Bitola (where they spent the Easter), Lovișta (Maloviste), Gopesh, Ohrid, Struga, Edessa (Vodena), Skopje, Krushevo and Veria. In the film edited by Manakia brothers is shown only their arrival to Gopesh, Resen and Bitola. In Gopesh the delegation is welcomed by the Vlach population and by a brass band. In Resen, in a small square, Nyazi Bey, one of the leaders of the Young Turks Revolution, and a great crowd greet them. The fact that Manakia brothers accompanied the delegation results from the difference of number of persons indicated by Istrati (27, plus the guide Perlepe) and the one mentioned by the newspaper *Aromânul/ The Vlach* (30 persons). The title of the Romanian copy coincides with Dr.C.I.Istrati's wording in his academically reports which indicates that the Romanian Academy purchased the film before 1913 when Macedonia was still Turkish territory.

*Turkish Sultan Mehmed Reshad V Visiting Bitola/ Turkiot Sultan Mehmet V Reshad vo poseta na Bitola* (1911), as well as the film showing the sultan's visit to Thessalonica can be considered as genuine newsreels made probably for a wider audience, not only the Vlach one, from the perspective of loyal subjects of the reformed empire after the revolution. Mehmed Reshad V, the last but one sultan of Turkey (1909-1918) reached the throne as a result of the victorious Young Turks' Revolution. In 1911 he visited the places where the revolution had started and where they had recorded its first successes. For a while they shoot from the train. It seems that the Sultan's



suite was traveling in two trains and the camera was in the first one. One can identify the railway stations of Surovichevo and Florina. Then we can say the railway station in Bitola, Fardhi Street (Širok Sokak that is Main Street) in Bitola, full of people, a parade and a brass band in front of the administrative building of the Bitola Vilayet as well as Tumbe Hotel and Coffee shop that hosted the Sultan. The shooting is mostly made from above, from the balcony of their house, still existing on Marshall Tito Street (ex- Fardhi Street). General Shefket Bey, known before by Manakia brothers as they had made him photos, opens the door of the carriage in order for the Sultan to descend.

*Turkish Sultan Mehmed Reshad V Visiting Thessalonica/ Turskiot Sultan Mehmed V Reshad vo poseta na Solun* (1911) shows the ship in which the Sultan comes, accompanied by other ships and boats on approaching the harbor, the pier and the street where the imperial suite goes, as well as a brass band. From the Vlach press<sup>25</sup> we can find out that the Sultan arrived from Istanbul on board of ship Barbaros Hayredin on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May and that he spent three days and a half in Thessalonica; that on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> of May was on his way to Skopje, where he arrived the next day; that Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> of June he was in Prishtina while Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> of June returned to Bitola and Saturday was back in Thessalonica. Also groups representing the Romanian schools marched past the Sultan in Bitola and Thessalonica.

During their lifetime some Romanian ethnologists and the Romanian Academy appreciated their activity, the Romanian press reproduced their photos several times and King Carol I himself rewarded their efforts. Later on they were almost forgotten in Romania<sup>19</sup>. In Romania their names were written again only in 1985! The oblivion of Romanians living abroad is a typical phenomenon for the communist epoch in Romania. The two brothers have always considered themselves Romanians but the Romanian attempts of claiming them have been sporadic and shy. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1951 after reading in *Libertatea/ Freedom* (newspaper of the Romanians in Vojvodina) about Nicolae Bocșan's staging in Romanian of "Mrs. Minister"/ "Gospodja ministar" by Branislav Nusic (1864- 1938), Milton was writing to teacher Bocșan in Vrsac: "I am a Romanian and when I see and read that Romanians record progress with their culture I fell happy and my heart feels with joy."<sup>20</sup> At the end of the letter he mentions with pride: "my film is screened all over Yugoslavia". He signs "Milton Manakia". The letter was written in 1951 when Romanian – Yugoslav relations were tensioned after the conflict between Tito and Stalin and Gheorghe Gheorghiu- Dej had read at the Comintern meeting a report denouncing Tito's "deviation".

Today Greece, R.Macedonia and even Albania<sup>21</sup> and Turkey<sup>22</sup> claim Manakia brothers. The fact that the two brothers had different citizenships after 1939 led also to the attempts of underlining the merits of one in the detriment of the other. The attempt of claiming Manakia brothers by the Albanians is based on the testimony of a client, Irfan Teršana, who has two photos and who pretended that "Manakia" himself had told him that his mother had been Albanian.

In the studies dedicated to Manakia brothers in Macedonia they specify the nationality of the two brothers. An encyclopedia of cinema, such as Roger Boussinot's one<sup>23</sup> mentions Milton Manakia as pioneer of Balkan cinema, as well as his nationality ("Aroumain" that is "Vlach") but omits the older brother. On their turn, older Yugoslav studies omit or change their nationality and in films editing Manakia footage they change the titles of the old films. In Greece and in R.Macedonia films like *Domestic Life with the Vlach Women in the Pindus* and *A Scene from the Primary Vlach Education* are called *The Weavers*, respectively *School on Open Air* because, with the exception of two films, only in Bucharest they preserve films edited and having original inserts, prepared for screening by the two brothers. Although the contemporary Greek newspapers knew at least about Ienache's photographic activity, they did not appreciate it but rejected it. Thus, *The Voice of Epirus/ Foni ti Ipiru* considered Ienache an "instigator" or "ape", *Pirrhos-* "the Avdella photographer" while *The Struggle/ O Agonas* called him "photographer and propagandist"<sup>24</sup>.

The Greeks began to understand their merits only in 1977 when Kostas Stamatou dedicated an article to them. In 1978 N.Zervos and Ch.Christodolou made a TV documentary followed two years later by the one by T.Payannis, while Photos Lambrinos and L.Loisos used Manakia footage

in their documentary *The Century Panorama/ Panorama kato hronia* (1984). The Greek specialists are trying today to consider Ienache and Milton as Greeks or to prove in many pages that the Vlachs are but Romanized Greeks.

For a long time due to their nationality Manakia brothers' films have been ignored and even their authors had to suffer but today their objective perception of a minority group should be cherished at its real value without nationalistic exaggerations or omissions. At least it should be considered their entire work as a whole as they do in the case of Auguste and Louis Lumière, Vittorio and Paolo Taviani or Luc and Jean- Pierre Dardenne without omitting one's merits in the favor of the other because one had become an Yugoslav citizen while the other a Greek citizen.

During the last years several filmmakers among whom some famous ones like Theo Angelopoulos or Milcho Manchevski paid homage to the pioneership work of Manakia brothers even in fiction films. Theo Angelopoulos in *Ulysses' Gaze/ To vlemma tou Odyssea* (1995) imagines a Greek filmmaker (featured by Harvey Keitel) who travels from Athens to Albania, Macedonia (from here together with a woman, featured by Maia Morgenstern), Bulgaria, Bucharest, Constanța, Belgrade and finally to risking his life during the siege of the town in order to watch an old film by Manakia brothers. The critics considered the film a journey in search for a lost vision and innocence having as pretext a lost film by Manakia brothers. On his turn, Greek director Photos Lambrinos in his documentary *Anniversary Banquet or the Balkans without Words/ Glenti genethlion- Mia vouvi Valkaniki istoria* (1995, Greece- Bulgaria) renders significant moments from the history of the Balkans using Manakia footage, as well as fragments of Greek, Turkish and Romanian mute films, from which the cultural similes in the Balkans become visible.

The first Greek documentary about Manakia brothers on film was made in 1988 (*Manakia Brothers/ Adelphoi Manakia*, d. Kostas Andritsos), 30 years after *Camera 300*.

Manakia Brothers destiny of being claimed by six nations is significant for the Balkans, which dramatically changed their borders in the last centuries, as well as for the history of cinema. Cinema has been even from its beginnings less an art than an industry and therefore less national. It is not therefore any exaggeration in asserting that the beginnings of cinema in the Balkans coincide with Manakia brothers' life. The last century is nearer to us not only chronologically but also due to moving images, inclusively the ones left by Manakia brothers. Wars have been waged, borders have been changed and history has been written according to transient rulers but some photos and moving pictures on silver nitrate have preserved with fidelity the images of our grandparents and in fact of our past. Maybe, on the scale of millennia one may consider that Manakia brothers have left to posterity an image of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as important as the one before Christ left by Strabo and Herodotus...

## Notes

1. The first locals shooting films in the Balkans have been Romanian neurologist Gheorghe Marinescu (1863- 1938) and his cameraman Constantin M. Popescu. They made a series of five scientific films starting with July 1898 and ending in 1901. Marinescu himself announced the use of cinema in scientific purposes in the French magazine "La Semaine Médicale" while Auguste Lumière acknowledged the merits of the Romanian scientist in a letter in 1924. The films were rediscovered in 1968 and the first of them, *Walking Difficulties in Organic Hemplegia/ Tulburările mersului în hemiplegia organică* (1898) has been acknowledged as the first scientific film in the world with the occasion of the first world congress of scientific films. In 1898 two Croatian partners Josip Stanić and Henrik Pegan from Trieste screened in their hometown and in Ljubljana besides the usual repertoire of Lumière films also two newsreels shot by them, among which *Sea Storm (in Opatija)/ Bura na moru* (See Nedić, Liljana- Slovenekijot film i kinematografija in "Razvojot i proniknuvaneto na balkanskite natsionalni kinenatografii vo periodot od 1895 do 1945 godina", Kinoteka na Makedonija, Skopje, 2003, p.144). In 1906 several cameramen probably locals shot

newsreels on the Olympic Games in Athens, developed and presented the same day. (See Mitropoulos, Aglae, op. cit., p.6.).

2. Genezata na makedonskijot igran film, Kinoteka na Makedonija, Skopje, 1992, p. 33.
3. Iorda, Marin- Jurnal, manuscript in the collection of the Romanian Film Archive.
4. Christodolou, Christos K.- The Manaki Brothers. The Greek Pioneers of the Balkanic Cinema, Organization for the Cultural capital of Europe, Thessalonica, 1997, p. 57.
5. Dimitrovski- Takets, Dimitar- Manaki i Bitola, Rabotnichkiot univerzitet Krste P. Misirkov, Skopje, 1975, p. 9.
6. *Fara armânească*, Yonkers, New York, 1986. In the field of ethnographic film Manakia brothers have not been quite the first in the world. Austrian Rudolf Poech (1870- 1921) made in 1904 several ethnographic films from the life of Papuans in New Guinea. However, we can refer to their pioneership in ethnographic films.
7. Agel, H.- Robert Flaherty, Ed. Seghers, 1965, p. 22.
8. The advertisements have been published between 1908-1912 in the periodicals *Dreptatea/ Justice* (weekly journal issued by A.N. Pineta between 1911- 1912 in Romanian at Thessalonica), *Deșteptarea/ Awakening* (weekly journal issued by Nicolae Batzaria in Romanian between 1908-1909 at Thessalonica) *Lilicea Pindului/ Pindus Flower* (monthly magazine issued in the Vlach dialect in Bucharest between 1910-1912).
9. Stardelov, Igor- Maistorot Mihailo Zega- jivotopis dostoen za istorija in *Kinopis* 3/ 1990. See also Konstantinov, Pavle- op. cit., p. 162.
10. Borcan, Silvia, Rîpeanu, Bujor T.- Catalogul filmelor documentare românești 1897- 1948, p. 12.
11. Out of gratitude Marinescu was informing Istrati with his research and letting “his dear and distinguished friend” know for instance through a letter on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1893 that he had been using microphotography in the study of neurology. Five years later for the first time he used cinema in scientific purposes, a merit acknowledged quite early by Auguste Lumière in a letter sent on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1924. See Marinescu, Gheorghe- Corespondență, Ed. Științifică, Bucharest, p. 25- 26, 124- 125. In 1898, the same year when Marinescu made the first scientific film in the world (*Walking Difficulties in Organic Hemiplegia/ Tulburările mersului în hemiplegia organică*), Levaditti was leaving for a Ph.D. in Paris. In 1903 he married Elena Istrati, C.I. Istrati’s daughter, therefore in a letter dated April, 17, 1905 addressed to his father-in-law and benefactor with “Dear Father”. See Nicolau, Ștefan S., Iftimovici, R.- Constantin Levaditti, Ed. Științifică, Bucharest, 1968, p. 70. Four years later Levaditti together with French physician Jean Commandon shot scientific films like *Phagocytosis/ Fagocitoza* and *Movement with Amoeba and Infusoria/ Mișcarea la amoebe și infuzori*. In 1920 he participated in making the fiction film *From the World’s Dreads/ Din groazele lumii/ Villagrem* (d. Jenö Janovics). It is about a moralizing drama about the effects of syphilis where Levaditti contributed as consultant as well as with images filmed under the microscope. The film benefited of a subsidy from the Romanian Ministry of Health and was screened for the first time in addition to a conference given by Levaditti on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1920 at the National Theatre in Cluj and later on in cinema theatres.
12. Nonevski, Boris- Kino Manaki, Kinoteka na Makedonija, Skopje, 2005, p. 7.
13. Stardelov, Igor- Maistorot Mihailo Zega- jivotopis dostoen za istorija in *Kinopis* 3/ 1990. See also Konstantinov, Pavle- op. cit., p. 162.
14. Stardelov, Igor- op.cit.
15. Konstantinov, Pavle- op. cit., p.162
16. Nonevski, Boris- op. cit., p. 9.
19. In 1903 Ienache published in *Universul/ The Universe* several photos, inclusively about the Saint Elias Uprising. During the same year he had photos published in “The Macedo- Romanian Ethnographic Album. Vlach Typology, Costumes and Places”/ “Albumul etnografic macedo-român. Tipuri, porturi și localități ale aromânilor”, Imprimerie L.Deyle & C-ie, Paris. Between 1906- 1912 he also published photos in the magazines *Frățilia/ Brotherhood* and *Familia/ Family* in Bitola, photos and advertisements in *Lilicea Pindului/ The Pindus Flower* (Bucharest) between 1908- 1912,

as well as in the journals *Dreptatea* and *Deșteptarea* in Thessalonica. Photos signed by “I.Manakia” were also published by Gustav Weigand in 1907 in the magazine *Dreizehnter Jahresbericht des Instituts für Rumanische Sprache* (1907, Leipzig), in 1911 in the magazine *Junimea literară/ Literary Youth* (Czernowitz), as well as in books such as “Les Roumains de la Macedoine” (1913, Bucharest) by A.Rubin, “Nomadic Romanians. A Study of the Life of Romanians in the Southern Balkan Peninsula”/ “Românii nomazi. Studiu din viața românilor din sudul Peninsulei Balcanice (1926, Institutul de Arte grafice Ardealul, Cluj) by Theodor Capidan and “Images d’ethnographie roumaine, dacoroumaine et aroumaine” (Societatea Cultural-Națională Apostol Margarit, Bucharest, 1928- 1934) by Tache Papahagi. Anastase Hâciu acknowledged their activity as photographers and film distributors in his book “The Vlachs. Trade, Industry, Arts, Expansion, Civilization”/ “Aromânii. Comerț, industrie, arte, expansiune, civilizație” (Tipografia Cartea Putnei, Focșani, 1936). Only after 49 years Constantin Săvulescu in “Illustrated Chronology of Photography in Romania mentioned the names of Manakia brothers again in Romania. Period 1834-1916”/ “Cronologia ilustrată a fotografiei în România. Perioada 1834- 1916” (Bucharest, 1985). 20. A letter sent to teacher Nicolae Bocșan in Vrsac, Serbia. See Țuțui, Marian- Op. cit., p. 23- 24.

21. Xoxha, Abas- Art i shtate ne Shqiperi, vol. I, Ed. Albin, Tirana, 1994, p. 64- 71.

22. \* \* \* - Fotografci Manakis Biraderler. Manastir, da Ilan. I Hurryiet/ The Manaki Brothers. The Proclamation of Freedom in Manastir, Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, Istanbul, 1997.

23. Boussinot, Roger- L’encyclopedia du cinema, Ed. Bordas, Paris, 1995, p.1338- 1339.

24. Christodolou, Christos K.- Op.cit., p. 53- 54.