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Under the Banner of Pathé: Cinema in the Balkans in its Formative Years (1896-1912)

Karl Kaser*

The French film company Pathé dominated the emerging international film market until the beginning of WWI. This analysis will concentrate on the relatively short time between the first film screenings in the region in 1896 and the outbreak of the First Balkan War in fall of 1912. Concretely, it will shed light on mobile and permanent cinema in the Balkans in a European context in the initial two subsections. The third part investigates, using the example of the Serbian capital Belgrade, whether and to what extent its population was prepared for this new visual adventure cinema. The fourth subsection, finally, analyses how the European film industry under the banner of Pathé developed and which role the *cinema balkanica* played in it. The weak economic development of the region as well as cultural-religious concerns were responsible for the minor role the Balkans played in international cinema.

Keywords: Balkans, cinema, film industry, Islam

Introduction

Interdisciplinary research of visual perception and modes of performance, or in other words of visual cultures in space and time are still far from being integrated into the generally acknowledged set of research fields in Southeast European or Balkan studies. Two decades after the “proclamation” of the pictorial, iconic or visual turn in human, cultural and social sciences the question remains open whether and in which way this turn will affect Southeast European or Balkan studies.¹ Independently from that, it should be clear that this turn challenges historical anthropology in and of Southeast Europe. Historical anthropological questions related to the visual, which are per se transdisciplinary will and cannot focus on a classical set of questions, for instance, formulated in art history (description, analysis and interpretation of pictures) and will and cannot consider all too much the aesthetics of movies, which constitutes the classic business of film and cinematography studies. An historical-anthropological point of view is more interested in pictures and visuals as social and cultural phenomena and analyses, for instance, the impact pictures have on us, how pictures change our views of the world and how

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¹ Kaser, Karl. 2013. Der visuelle Turn in der Südosteuropaforschung - kommt er oder kommt er nicht? Ein Forschungsbericht. *Südost-Forschungen* 72, 230-74.

subjective internal pictures are related to superordinate pictorial cultures and cultures of seeing. One of the most significant challenges of an historical anthropology of the visual with regard to the Balkan countries² consists of the study of the amalgamic meeting of Balkan visual cultures with those from “the West” in the second half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, as in the course of secularization, western visual modernity became an alternative to the previously religiously charged ways of seeing and viewing.³

The most important media in these amalgamation processes were photography and cinema, which have to be seen in their intermedial contexts.⁴ In a nutshell, the problem can be described as such: photography and the first functioning and commercially realizable photo cameras did not accidentally emerge in “the West,” or to be more precise, in France and Great Britain in approximately 1840. Photography was closely tied to the medium of painting, which was based upon the observer’s perspective and the laws of geometry in the West since the Renaissance at the latest. Here and in other western countries, painters experimented with the *camera obscura*. Early photographers were frequently trained as painters; painters frequently used photographs as motif templates. Similar intermedial processes can also be observed in the early film profession. Early cinema - as its “year of birth” usually 1895 is suggested, when Lumière Bros. screened their first films in Paris - cannot be considered without photography and modern theatre. Between photography and film immediate developmental relationships exist. Beyond that, many of the early cameramen were trained photographers. When approximately one decade after the first film screenings the staged feature film gained in importance, the emerging film industry could resort to actors and performers from theatres and vaudevilles. Early feature films and comedies looked like filmed theatre plays and vaudevilles.

One could argue that it was simply a question of time until pictures would begin to move from the economically and technically advanced western countries. Here, the visual media of painting, photography and theatre were at their most developed. Beyond that, millions of people had visited international expositions in London and Paris. The first films might have also constituted a sensation here, but movies met a broad audience that was already familiar with its precursor media. Not only that; the movie was a result of and at the same time the leading medium of capitalistically shaped modernity. For Karalis, cinema constituted one of the most important arts of capitalistic modernity and required a radical break with established practices with regard to aesthetics, perception and articulation.⁵ Cinema together with additional innovations such as the telegraph, telephone, railway, automobile and

² “Balkan countries” and “Balkans” are terms that here are related to the European regions under Ottoman domination at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

³ See Kaser, Karl. 2013. *Andere Blicke. Religion und visuelle Kulturen auf dem Balkan und im Nahen Osten*. Vienna: Böhlau, 131-70.

⁴ With regard to mediality in the sense of shifting communicative acts in the course of cultural change see Hickethier, Knut. 2010. *Mediatisierung und Medialisierung der Kultur*, in *Die Mediatisierung der Alltagswelt*, edited by Hartmann, Maren and Andreas Hepp. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 85-96.

⁵ Karalis, Vrasidas. 2012. *A History of Greek Cinema*. London: Continuum, xvii.

photography signalled a broad social, economic and cultural transformation, which is commonly conceived as modernity. Cinema has to be understood as a central component of “a culture of modern life.”⁶

Within this context, Kirby pays attention to the previously mentioned mutual reference of railway and silent movie. How come, so her consideration, the railroad as transportation played a key role in many movies? One explanation for that might be that the train fits as metaphor for cinema, since cinema also offers a frame with moving pictures in it, simulating a journey as a visual experience with dissolving time and space. Both cinema and train travel share the paradox of simultaneous movement and standstill: passengers as well as cinemagoers sit while they are transported through time and space - physically and visually on the train, only visually in the cinema. A second explanation is that both constitute pronounced metaphors for progress and modernity.⁷

Cinema emerged in a specific context and was quickly transferred to other contexts and regions of the world from which cinema does not originate, with visual traditions which could not as easily be linked to cinema as it was in the West. In this context, a series of questions could be raised such as, for instance, the question of connecting factors between inherited visual traditions and the arriving cinema. What triggered the development of cinema in these regions? Was it confronted with approval, scepticism, or refusal? Could it become a form of entertainment only for western-oriented elites, or was it attractive for a broad range of social groups? Could cinema become an integral component of modern life? Or, did it constitute a form of cultural colonialism as Arslan⁸ supposes in view of the fact that the whole film repertoire was covered almost exclusively by West European production and distribution companies until WWI? This includes the question of capabilities and limitations of film production in countries and regions which lacked a capitalistically shaped modernity completely or partly until WWI and where a rail journey was still only experienced by a small minority? Were sufficient professionals available on the spot (cameramen, directors, producers, electricians and projectionists), which were able to handle the newly imported medium? And if this was not sufficiently the case - what were the consequences? A question that was relevant for the Balkans as well as other regions: how did the Muslim and Jewish populations deal with photography and cinema - populations for which the Second Commandment of the Old Testament was relevant, as according to it the human being was not allowed to create pictures of God, other human beings or animals? And finally, the question: did the regional populations simply imitate the newly imported film culture or did processes of diffusion, amalgamation and reinterpretation take place, which gave cinema significance also in non-western contexts?

I think these are essential questions, which, however, have not been addressed and consequently not answered by conventional cinema and film

⁶ Charney, Leo. 1995. *Introduction*, in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, edited by Charney, Leo and Vanessa R. Schwartz. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1-10.

⁷ Kirby, Lynne. 1997. *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2-3, 7.

⁸ Arslan, Savaş. 2011. *Cinema in Turkey. A New Critical History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 9-10.

historiography. Most of them cannot or cannot sufficiently be answered in this article.⁹ The reason for that is that either no pertinent research has been conducted or the answers would require the length of a monograph. At least, several authors have addressed some crucial questions concerning the adoption of western modernity in cinema in the Balkans: Gürata for Turkey¹⁰, Arslan for the late phase of the Ottoman Empire¹¹ and Karalis for Greece,¹² have conducted pertinent research which should be explicitly appreciated here.

Another point of reference is where I mentioned my observation that obviously the consecutive two Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the onset of WWI one year later stimulated an initial visual revolution in the Balkans caused by the temporary mobilization of all visual resources in the respective Balkan countries as well as in western countries. Of course, the military leadership played a significant role in this regard - be it as commissioners of visual products for the sake of documentation, propaganda and the mobilization of the population or for the purpose of providing photo and film cameras to the quickly established photo and film authorities, attached to the military supreme command.¹³ This is why I will concentrate my analyses here on the relative short period of time between the first film screenings in the region in 1896 and the outbreak of the First Balkan War in the fall of 1912, which can be considered as the formative years of *cinema balkanica*¹⁴ for the decades that followed. Concretely, I will shed light on mobile and permanent cinema in the Balkans in European contexts in the initial two subsections. The third one investigates, using the example of the Serbian capital Belgrade, whether and to what extent its population was prepared for the new visual adventure cinema. The fourth subsection, finally, analyses how the European film industry under the banner of Pathé developed and which role *cinema balkanica* played in it.

The Mobile Cinema

In contrast to the interwar period, in which Hollywood worldwide - and herewith also in western Europe and in the Balkans - dominated the cinema business, in the period before WWI *grosso modo* French, Italian and Danish production companies constituted the driving forces. Among these countries, French companies - with Pathé leading the way - held the dominant market position. The economically weak and infrastructurally modestly developed Balkan countries, however, played a subordinate role in this business.

⁹ Many of them are addressed in my monograph, in Kaser, Karl. 2018. *Hollywood auf dem Balkan. Die visuelle Moderne an der europäischen Peripherie (1900-1970)*. Vienna: Böhlau.

¹⁰ Gürata, Ahmet. 2006. *Translating Modernity: Remakes in Turkish cinema*, in *Asian Cinemas: A Reader & Guide*, edited by Eleftheriotis, Dimitris and Gary Needham. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 242-54; Gürata, Ahmet. 2007. *Hollywood in Vernacular: Translation and Cross-Cultural Reception of American Films in Turkey*, in *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, edited by Maltby, Richard / Stokes, Melvin and Robert C. Allen. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 333-47.

¹¹ Arslan, *Cinema*.

¹² Karalis, *History*.

¹³ Kaser, Karl. 2015. *Visualizing the Balkans: the Balkan Wars, the Great War and Visual Modernity*, in *Contextualizing Changes: Migrations, Shifting Borders and New Identities in Eastern Europe*, edited by Hristov, Petko / Kasabova, Anelia / Troeva, Evgenia and Dagošlaw Demski. Sofia: Paradigma, 13-27, 18-21.

¹⁴ Kaser, Karl. 2014. *Cinema Balkanica im frühen 20. Jahrhundert - ein Amalgam westlicher und regionaler Modernen*. *Balkanistic forum* 15, 163-80.

In the first decade after the film premiere of Lumière Bros. (December 1895), a film or cinema industry was not yet established. Permanent cinema halls were rare; the screened silent film strips were short, by no means feature-length, and documented events and landscapes around the world. They were not yet documentaries in the narrower sense, because these non-fiction films, which would be better called newsreel cinema,¹⁵ were lacking a structuring “message.” Camera technology was only modestly developed; film cameras were used like photo cameras. Since they could not yet be pivoted, they were directed at a certain location, which assumed the character of a theatre stage. Therefore, films offered cheap distraction within the programs of fairs and vaudevilles or were screened by mobile projectionists in taverns and coffee houses. This situation should be exemplified by means of the German example.

The travelling cinema emerged from mobile vaudevilles of travelling showmen, which were modified since 1896 by installing a projector and a canvas. In contradiction to the initial phase, in which the film program constituted only one part of the stage program, later exclusively films were screened. A film program lasted no longer than fifteen to twenty minutes in which approximately eight to ten films were screened: magic films, fairy films, comedic scenes as well as travel and industry pictures. These travelling cinemas were extraordinarily successful. In 1904, they reached already more than one million viewers per week, meaning 36 million spectators per season, which lasted from March to October. The viewers were from the entire social strata, which, separated in circles, visited screenings. Film programs were more attractive than travelling vaudevilles, because films included international stars of the vaudeville, which could not be admired in an ordinary vaudeville.¹⁶

In around 1910, when already a significant number of permanent cinemas were established, the decrease of mobile film began. Until WWI the frequency of mobile cinemas decreased to the level of 1898. In the 1920s the mobile cinema had already become insignificant.¹⁷

Additionally, the Balkan countries were impacted by travelling film projectionists. The early phase of film projections in the region was characterized by the fact that they were conducted almost exclusively by foreigners from Central Europe, Italy and France. In Bulgaria, for instance, French, German, Czech and Slovak projectionists first arrived around 1900. In the first years of the twentieth century, the Czech František Prohaska (born 1845) undertook a screening travel to Russia (Odessa) and through the Balkans

¹⁵ These nonfictional films are generally subsumed as “newsreel cinema.” Newsreel cinema represent an “aesthetics of picture,” which strings together single shots, whereas the documentary offers a broadly structured context. During WWI first actual documentaries were produced: Oppelt, Ulrike. 2001. *Film und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg. Propaganda als Medienrealität in Aktualitäten- und Dokumentarfilm*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 22.

¹⁶ Garncarz, Joseph. 2008. *Öffentliche Räume für Filme: Zur Etablierung des Kinos in Deutschland, in Kinoöffentlichkeit (1895-1920): Entstehung, Etablierung, Differenzierung*, edited by Müller, Corinna und Harro Segeberg. Marburg: Schüren Verlag, 32-43, 35-37.

¹⁷ Garncarz, *Räume*, 41-43.

to the Near East. His route also visited Bulgaria.¹⁸ Among the few local projectionists was the Serbian magician and entertainer Stojan Nanić from Zaječar, who denoted his mobile cinema as the “First Serbian Cinematograph.” He screened films in Belgrade and other Serbian cities in 1900 and 1901.¹⁹

A second feature appears when we analyse mobile film screenings in Istanbul, which were concentrated in the district of Pera (today part of the district of Beyoğlu), inhabited primarily by the non-Muslim population. The first public film screenings were probably organized in 1901, when the Romanian Sigmund Weinberg (1868-1954) imported the first projector to the Ottoman Empire. He showed short thirty and forty meter films in, among other locations, the music hall *Concordia* in Pera, during breaks between vaudeville performances. Reinforced by the success of the initial screenings, he continued with film performances in the Muslim district of Şehzade Başı in a coffee house during Ramadan in the evenings after sunset; this, however, obviously remained an exception. In 1902, Weinberg imported a new electric projector and continued with screenings in music halls, circus performances, coffee houses and in the gardens of the Taksim square. The announcements were printed in French, German, Armenian and Greek but not in Turkish, which let us conclude that the expected spectatorship was primarily non-Muslim and/or belonged to the Muslim societal elite, which was European-oriented and in many cases spoke French.²⁰

The broader Muslim population was obviously not or at most moderately interested in going to the cinema. Obviously, cultural and the above mentioned religious considerations were essential for this attitude. This is reflected also by the scarce evidence of travelling cinematographers in Albanian territories. Thus, until 1905 there is only one isolated piece of evidence for visiting cinematographers: In 1897, an Italian couple is mentioned which toured through the Albanian territories.²¹ From 1905 onwards, occasional foreigners are mentioned who organized private film screenings for high-ranking notables, and in 1908 the Greek-Albanian Shkodranian painter, architect and photographer Kolë Idromeno (1860-1939) began to show slides and films in his home.²²

Cultural traditions prohibited the mixed attendance of Muslim men and women at film performances. This problem could be solved by separate performances for women or by separated screening rooms. Scarcely before the outbreak of WWI, the restaurant *Mostar* in Sarajevo, for instance, the owner of which was a certain Mario Katić, had a temporary cinema (*Katić's Cinema*),

¹⁸ Kãrdzhilov, Petãr. 2011. Vključaneto na Bãlgarija v globalnata kinomreža v kraja na XIX i naçaloto na XX vek. *Problemi na izkustvo* 3, 38-43.

¹⁹ Kosanović, Dejan and Dinko Tucaković. 1998. *Stranci u rajju*. Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 12.

²⁰ Hinkle, Eugene M. 2007. *The Motion Picture in Modern Turkey, July 1, 1933*, in *The Turkish Cinema in the Early Republican Years*, edited by Bali, Rifat N., US Diplomatic Documents on Turkey 2, Istanbul: Isis Press, 25-185, 29; Arslan, *Cinema*, 30-31.

²¹ Hoxha. Abaz. 2009. *A Chronography of Albanian Cinema*. *Arbenia Forum* (accessed: 11. January 2018).

²² Balauri, Elsa. 1996. ‚Zu Tode erwacht,‘ in *Die Siebte Kunst auf dem Pulverfass. Balkan-Film*, edited by Grbić, Bogdan / Loidolt, Gabriel and Rossen Milev. Graz: edition blimp, 14-17.

which was very popular in the summer. The owner separated the screening room, which allowed Muslim women to also attend screenings.²³

An additional cultural obstacle in the context of gender relations among Muslims can be seen in the fact that before WWI, even in Istanbul it was considered morally reprehensible to let Muslim actresses appear in theatre plays; their roles were played by actors.²⁴ It would not be illogical that the gaze on western actresses on the cinema screen also was considered morally reprehensible. However, things could even become more complicated. Muhsin Ertoğrul, Turkey's most prominent film director of the interwar period, shot the feature "A tragedy of love in Istanbul" in 1922. During filming the film crew was pelted with stones by conservative Muslims because an Armenian and a Russian actor played Muslim women.²⁵

Stoil tried to relativize these kinds of religious-cultural arguments by pointing at the fact that the Muslim populations in the Balkans would have been predominantly poor and apart from the Albanian territories would have been lived mainly in the countryside. The spectatorship, however, would have consisted of urban middle classes. Besides that, Muslim countries such as Egypt and Pakistan yielded relatively early notable film industries. The correlation between a high proportion of Muslims and low cinematographic activity therefore could have been caused by the modest economic standards of the Muslim populations in the Balkans.²⁶ To reduce this Muslim reluctance to visit cinemas constitutes a non-acceptable oversimplification.²⁷ On the following pages I will bring forward more evidence in favour of my hypothesis that foregrounds religious and cultural reasons.

The Permanent Cinema

Between 1907 and 1913 film producers in the USA and Europe began to adopt contemporary capitalistic industrial practices: increased specialization, differentiation of production and the separation of distribution and performance into independent areas. The increasing length of films as well as the increasing demand of cinema owners for regular supply demanded the standardization of production practices. The establishment of permanent

²³ Kosanović, Dejan. 2005. *History of Cinema in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1897-1945*. Belgrade: Naučna KMD, Feniks Film, 12.

²⁴ Berktaş, Esin. 2013. The Cinema in Turkey During 1940s. *International Journal of Social, Human Science and Engineering* 7, 259-68, 147.

²⁵ Kaser, *Hollywood*, 140.

²⁶ Stoil, Michael J. 1982. *Balkan Cinema: Evolution After the Revolution*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 19.

²⁷ This oversimplification is also related to the practice of many historians to isolate the phenomena of film and cinema from their broader context. The attitude of various strata of Muslim society toward cinema has to be embedded in relevant discourses related to the visual representation in general in the various tendencies of Islam. These discourses include classical art as well as photography, caricature and various forms of theatre and emerged in the second half of the 19th century (for a short overview see Kaser *Hollywood*, 98-114). Islam has never found a univocal attitude with regard to various forms of visual representation. Wahhabist Saudi Arabia is a good example. Whereas in most of Islamic countries cinema has become a non-disputed institution, Saudi Arabia announced its permission of cinema halls after a 35-year ban in late 2017 (Agency France - Presse. 2017. [Saudi Arabia to Allow Cinemas in Kingdom After 35-Year Ban](#). *The Telegraph*, 11. December 2017 (accessed: 11. January 2018).

cinemas supported the rationalization of distribution and screening practices and encouraged the production of longer films (features). The average film had already reached the length of fifteen minutes. However, there were already feature films, which lasted one hour or even longer. In these years the film became a central factor in cultural life and established itself as mass medium.

In Germany as well as in other western European countries a boom in cinema start-ups set in in 1905. The first permanent cinemas were established in empty shops - therefore called "shop cinema" (*Ladenkino*) in city centres. These shop cinemas were like entertainment pubs, in which one could enjoy also beer or other drinks. A precondition for the success of this kind of cinema was a comprehensive selection of films, enabling longer programs and a frequent change of films. In contrast to the travelling cinema, the program had to become full-length (instead of 15 to 20 minutes, 60 minutes or more).²⁸

The actual innovation of the permanent cinema, however, was not the increased length of the film but the establishment of drama as a film genre. Drama elevated cinema entertainment from the level of fairs to that of theatre. The offerings of permanent cinemas for many people were more attractive than those of straight theatres. Cinemas presented popular dramas, which would not have gained acceptance in the theatre. Theatres offered sophisticated entertainment for the upper social strata of society, the cinema screened dramas for a broader audience. In addition, cinema entrance was significantly cheaper than theatre tickets. In 1908 permanent cinemas attracted four times more visitors than mobile cinemas - 171 million. In 1911, already approximately two thousand cinemas existed in Germany. The number of cinemas in the city of Berlin increased from 16 (1905) to 139 (1907) and 206 (1913). Whereas the shop cinemas attracted the lower social strata, the cinema palaces in the city centre attracted the upper social strata. This is the reason for the very broad social distribution of cinemagoers.²⁹

Similar was the situation in Great Britain and France. In 1914, London comprised almost five hundred cinemas for approximately seven million inhabitants. Compared to London, St. Petersburg with its 2.2 million inhabitants had only 130 cinemas (1913). This figure doubled almost to 229 by 1916 (Youngblood 2005, 556). In comparison, the number of Parisian cinemas was approximately 40 (end of 1907), 60 (end of 1908) and 90 (1910). On the eve of WWI this number was 180.³⁰ Paris had approximately two million inhabitants on the eve of WWI. This means that in St. Petersburg one cinema was for 17,000 inhabitants on average, in London for 14,000 and in Paris for 11,000.

Compared with western Europe, developments in Balkan capitals differ in some ways and were less dynamic. One of the most important reasons was the comparatively low level of economic development accompanied by rampant poverty.³¹ Strikingly, the shop cinema as initial phase of permanent cinema

²⁸ Garncarz, *Räume*, 38-40.

²⁹ Garncarz, *Räume*, 42.

³⁰ Meusy, Jean-Jacques. 2002. How Cinema Became a Cultural Industry: The Big Boom in France Between 1905 and 1908. *Film History* 14, 418-29, 422.

³¹ Kaser, *Hollywood*, 57-58.

cannot be discovered in Balkan capitals; maybe there were no appropriate shops available. Also striking is that in Muslim shaped capitals, cinemas were operated almost exclusively by non-Muslims and that in Muslim shaped regions and countries there were no permanent cinemas established until 1914. In Istanbul, the first permanent cinema could be opened only after the revolution of the Young Turks in 1908. Before that, only mobile cinemas operated and only male spectators were permitted. The first regular cinema was the *Cinéma Théâtre Pathé Frères*, which began operation in 1908 and was managed by the already mentioned Sigmund Weinberg.³² The first cinema operated by a Muslim was the *Milli Sinema* (National Cinema), which was opened in 1914.³³

The first permanent cinema in Bosnia-Herzegovina - and probably in the Balkans generally - was opened in Sarajevo in December 1907 - the *Edison American Bioskop* that was operated by an Italian by the name of Giovanni Fabris. It screened mainly French films produced by Pathé and burned down in 1911. At the beginning of August 1910, the second permanent cinema, the *Electro-Theater-Thaumatrograph* owned by Georg Gritsch, who later on opened a cinema in Travnik, began to operate. An additional cinema, the *Apollo Kino* started operation in September 1912 in today's Irbi-Street. It was owned by the entrepreneur and builder Albert Metz. The *Jugendstil* building comprised 600 seats, was equipped with central heating and ventilation and was lauded in the press making it the most elegant cinema of the Habsburg Monarchy. In 1913, another two cinemas were opened: the *Korzo* with 250 seats and the *Imperial* with 600 red-velvet seats. Both belonged to the family of Albert Metz, who had died in the meantime.³⁴ This means that on the eve of WWI, Sarajevo had four cinemas with semi-significant seat capacities; three of them were owned by the same family. It is worth mentioning that the biggest spectator group was foreigners, coming to Sarajevo since 1878, when the country was occupied by Austro-Hungary; the second largest group was soldiers and the families of foreign military officers and civil officers, the third largest group children and young; only the fourth group was local citizens. Muslim women did not attend screenings.³⁵

Sarajevo had 52,000 inhabitants in 1910. With one cinema for 13,000 inhabitants the city's cinema density was on the level of Paris and London. In contrast, in other Muslim shaped areas such as Kosovo³⁶ and countries such as Albania³⁷ there was obviously not one single permanent cinema. The well-developed cinema infrastructure of Sarajevo was thanks to the fact that the

³² In the 1910s in the Pera district additional cinemas began to operate: the *Ciné Éclair*, the *Ciné Lion*, the *Ciné Palace*, the *Ciné Cosmographe*, the *Ciné Centrale*, the *Les Cinémas Orientaux* and the *Ciné Gaumont*. They were operated by members of non-Muslim population groups or by foreigners. Some of them offered separate screenings exclusively for women (Arslan, *Cinema*, 30-31).

³³ Arslan, *Cinema*, 30-31.

³⁴ Kosanović, *History*, 14-17, 32.

³⁵ Slijepčević, Bosa. 1982. *Kinematografija u Srbiji, Crnoj Gori, Bosni i Hercegovini 1896-1918*. Belgrade: Univerzitet umetnosti u Beogradu; Institut za film u Beogradu, 293-94.

³⁶ Kosanović, Dejan. 1985. *Počeci kinematografije na tlu Jugoslavije 1896-1918*. Belgrade: Institut za film, Univerzitet umetnosti, 290-91.

³⁷ Balauri, *Zu Tode erwacht*, 14-17.

civil service members recruited in other parts of the Monarchy were concentrated in the capital city.

The first permanent cinema of Belgrade, the *Pariz*, was established by the merchant and hotelier Svetozar Botorić in the premises of his hotel in late 1908. Equipment and films had to be obtained from the representative of Pathé in Budapest, Leo Goldstein. He also imported films for the few other cinemas in the country. In 1911 he became the official “Representative of Pathé Bros. for Serbia and Bulgaria.”³⁸ At the beginning of WWI, 18 permanent cinemas operated in Belgrade.³⁹ In 1914 Belgrade had approximately 100,000 inhabitants; this means one cinema for 6,000 inhabitants on average. According to these figures Belgrade was substantially better provided with cinemas than Paris or London.⁴⁰ In the rest of Serbia approximately 30 cinemas (4 in Niš alone) were operating. The cinema projectionists in the first cinemas had to be recruited from foreign countries.⁴¹

Comparatively under-served with permanent cinemas was Athens. In 1920, the Greek capital had only six cinemas and 130,000 inhabitants. Certainly, there were in addition an unknown number of open air cinemas, which operated only in the summer season.⁴² If we calculate six permanent cinemas, then one cinema had to serve for 22,000 inhabitants.

We can conclude that metropolitan agglomerations were differently equipped with cinematic infrastructure. One question that derives from this fact is whether the Balkan capitals and their inhabitants were sufficiently “modern” and prepared for the new medium of film.

The Modern Balkan Capital

One of the characteristics of the Balkan capitals was that until WWI, they were emerging without any noteworthy industrial growth. They were the result of their national, political and administrative centrality. Only in the interwar period socioeconomic change became visible and an intermediate sprint of industrialization in the 1920s intensified urbanization; they lost their character as purely bureaucratic towns. Already before WWI, the cityscape and the urban lifestyle moved towards occidentalization, westernization, de-orientalization and de-traditionalization.⁴³

³⁸ Film distribution for cinemas in the Balkans was organized via Trieste, Vienna and Budapest, where representatives of practically all film producers were present. Budapest provided Slavonia, Vojvodina and Serbia with films and equipment: Kosanović and Tucaković, *Stranci*, 28.

³⁹ Jovičić, Stevan. 2010. [Kinematografija u Srbiji 1896-1941](#). *Südslavistik-online* 2, 23-33, 24-25 (accessed: 11. January 2018).

⁴⁰ However, the number of cinemas per inhabitants does not say very much. More meaningful would be seat capacities, but this kind of statistics is not available for the early Balkan cinema.

⁴¹ Kosanović, *Počeci*, 55, 59.

⁴² Karalis, *History*, 1-4.

⁴³ Höpken, Wolfgang. 2006. *Schrittmacher der Moderne? Urbanisierung und städtische Lebenswelten in den Metropolen Südosteuropas im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, in *Die europäische Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert: Wahrnehmung - Entwicklung - Erosion*, edited by Lenger, Friedrich and Klaus Tenfelde. Cologne: Böhlau, 67-75.

Places where one could spend one's leisure time in the style of Central European urban culture began to spread out towards the Balkans: theatre, opera, varieties, restaurants, clubs and other forms of socializing, which involved increasingly non-elitist circles, emerged. In the interwar period, mechanisms of social distinction with regard to clothing became more sophisticated, but the typical leisure and entertainment facilities opened up to a broader stratum. Cinema, previously not accessible for everybody, became a form of entertainment for all classes. We do not know all too much about the consumers of this "cultural supply," but a type of commercial amusement industry emerged. Therefore, the distance between capital cities and provincial cities became more pronounced, where similar developments did not or did only in a less accentuated form take place.⁴⁴ But also the size of capital cities and their social stratification became important. Different groups of the urban population had different attitudes regarding religious rigidity and cultural openness, and this affected the Muslim as well as the Jewish and Christian sections of the population. In this sense, the dimensional relationship between an emerging modern Balkan capital city like Belgrade with its close to 100,000 inhabitants before WWI and the much larger, traditional metropolis of Istanbul with its almost one million inhabitants should be mentioned.⁴⁵

The Balkan capitals around 1900, parallel to the initial film screenings and the establishment of permanent cinemas, began to develop modern lifestyles. But the lack of industrialization distinguished them significantly from cities such as Paris, London or Berlin, which constituted the European pillars of industrial capital accumulation. Nonetheless: in the two or three decades before WWI in every nook and corner was dug, built and modernized. If we remain in Belgrade, coffee houses belonged to the carriers of modernity. There, the first bulb was switched on in 1880, the first violinists played classical music in 1894, the first films were screened in 1896 and the first opera was performed.⁴⁶

Work on the construction of an underground sewer system began in September 1905 and was finished in 1914. Until then, faeces were stored in septic, not sterile dumps, which had resulted in considerable hygienic and sanitary problems. Compared to other European cities, in 1887 Frankfurt had established the most modern sewer system in Europe.⁴⁷ In Belgrade work on the construction of a public water supply system was initiated in 1890. On the 29 June 1892, its activation was accompanied by an opening ceremony. Hamburg had already completed such a system in 1842, Berlin in 1856, Frankfurt in 1859 and Munich in 1883. Between 1870 and 1900 most of the large and medium-sized European cities followed.⁴⁸

The tram was probably the most characteristic product of urban modernity. It signified the openness of a city for progress and enabled the linking of the downtown, the suburbs and the surrounding settlements. Among the first European cities, Berlin established a tramline in 1879, Rome in 1890, Milan in

⁴⁴ Höpken, *Schrittmacher*, 88-93.

⁴⁵ Kaser, *Hollywood*, 40-64.

⁴⁶ Stojanović, Dubravka. 2008. *Kaldrma i asfalt. Urbanizacija i evropeizacija Beograda 1890-1914*. Belgrade: Čigoja, 271.

⁴⁷ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 150-55.

⁴⁸ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 142-43.

1895, St. Petersburg in 1907 and Bucharest in 1909. In Belgrade, the first horse drawn tram was inaugurated on 1. October 1892. It was a solemn moment; on the tram were the mayor and the lees of Belgrade's administration. Metropolitan Mihailo blessed the tramcars.⁴⁹

The first bulb, powered by a generator, was switched on in downtown Belgrade's coffeehouse *Hamburg* in 1880. Two years later this lighting technology was also introduced in the National Theatre, and in July 1891 the municipal government decided to introduce electric street lighting. The Parisian branch of the electric company "Edison/New York" was commissioned to plan an electric plant. This company had the broadest experience and had already electrified London, Paris and Vienna. The preparatory operations were concluded in mid-January of 1894 and some of Belgrade's streets were electrically illuminated for the first time. This had an impact on nightlife; many new coffeehouses were founded, and the circus "Henry" advertised performances under electric light.⁵⁰

The National Theatre (founded 1869) with its repertoire that consisted almost exclusively of foreign plays suffered, especially in the initial phase, from the poor goodwill of the public. Therefore, in 1873 it had to close temporarily.⁵¹ Much more attention received circuses, which obviously stopped off in Belgrade since the middle of the 1890s. At the beginning of the twentieth century they disposed of electric lighting. Tickets were relatively expensive - the most expensive category cost 5 dinar, the cheapest ones, however, only 80 para, approximately the same price as a cinema ticket.⁵²

Around 1900, Belgrade already offered alternative venues to the theatre in the form of varieties and orpheums. For instance, since 1899 the orpheum of Brana Cvetković (1874-1942) guested every evening in the restaurant *Kolarac* in the city centre. He was a scene designer in the National Theatre, but in the everyday life of the Belgradeans he with his orpheum that offered humoristic and satiric entertainment was much more important. The performances were popular and the hall always completely booked out.⁵³ Already in 1894, a report about the well-known comedian Djordje Babić mentioned that he had established an orpheum "in Serbian spirit." Allegedly, he started performing only when at least 1,200 dinar had been collected. Among other things, he was able to imitate 150 different people.⁵⁴

An additional antecedent of the cinema in Belgrade and in other Balkan capitals such as Sarajevo⁵⁵ and Istanbul⁵⁶ was the panopticon. Since 1896 mobile panopticons regularly visited Belgrade. The first stationary one was built in 1900. It consisted of a circular wall with twenty holes; in front of each

⁴⁹ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 129-31.

⁵⁰ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 120-24.

⁵¹ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 197-203.

⁵² Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 305-7.

⁵³ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 218-19.

⁵⁴ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 218-20.

⁵⁵ Slijepčević, *Kinematografija*, 277.

⁵⁶ Balan, Canan. 2008. Transience, Absurdity, Dreams and Other Illusions: Turkish Shadow Play. *Early Popular Visual Culture* 6, 171-85, 171.

hole there was a chair. Through the hole the visitor looked at immobile three-dimensional photographs for one minute; after a minute a sound rung out and a new picture appeared. The panopticon, also called photoplasticon, represented the newest invention of visual technology in the downtown. People visited it in order to undertake a virtual cruise around the world; they “visited” the most famous metropolises, rivers and seas, mountains and other scenic attractions for a low price. The entrance fee was only 50 para.⁵⁷ This was approximately the half of the entrance fee of a mobile film screening.⁵⁸

As we can see, the “modern” Balkan capital offered their inhabitants an increasingly broader visual entertainment program, reminiscent of Central European cities before the first permanent cinemas were established. Parallel to that, the cityscape was changing insofar as people began to change their traditional clothes that reminded of the time of the Ottoman Empire to “western” ones.⁵⁹ Beyond that, additional symbols of modernity arrived in Belgrade: since 3. April 1903 the first automobile drove the roads of the capital, and in autumn of 1910 the first air show was performed, which, however, ended unsatisfactorily for the defraying auditory.⁶⁰

When the first cinemas of Belgrade opened their doors, the potential spectatorship was already trained to deal with visual pleasures and spoiled by a broad western-style visual supply. However, this was not the case in Muslim contexts, where the described antecedents of the cinema were marginalized. Many Muslims were hostile towards theatre.⁶¹ The mentioned Second Commandment resulted in the repression of figural painting, three-dimensional sculpture and embodiment in the sense of the European theatre. European-styled theatre (including opera and operetta) in the Ottoman Empire therefore did not emerge from the core of Muslim culture but was instead imported by non-Muslim minorities (predominantly Armenians, Greeks and Arabic Christians).

In Istanbul, the first theatre buildings with a proscenium were established and led by members of minority groups since the late 1830s. They served also as stages for European travelling circuses and theatre companies. Performances were either in Ottoman-Turkish or in the respective minority languages and accordingly the visitors were mainly western-oriented Muslims, Armenians and Greeks. One of these theatres, the *Ottoman Theatre* was initiated by the Armenian Güllü Agop (Vartovian) in 1868. He worked almost exclusively with Armenian actors and actresses and staged among others European plays (Molière, Hugo, Voltaire) in Armenian and Turkish. Instead of translating them directly, he adapted them to the Ottoman cultural environment.⁶² Until 1914, a formal acting training did not exist. However, the work of a

⁵⁷ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 298-300; Slijepčević, *Kinematografija*, 11-13.

⁵⁸ Kosanović, *Počeci*, 41.

⁵⁹ Mišković, Nataša. 2008. *Basare und Boulevards. Belgrad im 19. Jahrhundert*. Vienna: Böhlau, 262.

⁶⁰ Stojanović, *Kaldrma*, 333.

⁶¹ Puchner, Walter. 1975. *Das neugriechische Schattentheater Karagiozis*. Munich: Self-publishing company, 41.

⁶² Arslan, *Cinema*, 21; Özgü, Melâhat. 1974. *Türkei*, in *Theatergeschichte Europas*, edited by Kindermann, Heinz. Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 523-24, 521-73.

conservatoire established in this year suffered of the country's involvement in WWI.⁶³ The European elite theatre was only reluctantly accepted because it could not be linked to traditional forms of performances in the Ottoman Empire which constituted mass entertainment

In contradiction to the forms of European theatre, these traditional forms of mass entertainment were in line with the most influential Islamic scholars: the *Karagöz* shadow theatre, the *meddahlık* (story telling), the *orta oyunu* (a kind of popular drama without stage) and the *tuluat* theatre. They were improvised, without script and performed by lays.⁶⁴ The most popular form was the *Karagöz* shadow theatre with a tradition dating back to the sixteenth century. It was popular among all societal groups, men and women and all religious groups.⁶⁵ It was obviously also widespread in the Balkans.⁶⁶ A *hadith* (a quotation, expression of opinion of the prophet) permitted this kind of theatre because the hole in the figure through which the thread was led made clear that the puppet did not come close to a human being.⁶⁷ *Karagöz* (the black eyed) was the main character.

The *tuluat*-theatre constituted a kind of improvisational theatre without stage and script. This form probably came closest to European theatre and could be considered a mixture of both types. It adapted western scripts and performed it in western-style theatres such as the above-mentioned *Ottoman Theatre* but also in coffee houses and by travelling companies. Improvised vulgar texts were combined with improvised dance and music. Characters and features could be changed during performances, based on the reactions of the audience.⁶⁸

It seems to be obvious that neither *Karagöz* nor the *tuluat*-theatre constitute antecedents of the cinema. Both were religiously permitted; this was not so clear with cinema. Both were improvised; film needed a script. Both did not have a clear narrative, which a film usually has. Both were performed by lays; the film needs trained actors. *Karagöz* had neither a clear temporal structure (things could happen in the sixteenth and in the nineteenth century at the same time) nor a clear spatial structure (a house could be higher than a mountain). Both did not require technical equipment, but a cinema does. Both could be performed almost everywhere, the film needed a specifically equipped room (cinema).⁶⁹ As it looks, between traditional and accepted forms of performances and the cinema there was a considerable gap that could not be easily bridged.

Back to Belgrade, its population and its 18 cinemas before the outbreak of WWI. How was its spectatorship composed? This question can hardly be answered in a satisfying way. The influx of people to the Balkan capitals was

⁶³ Özgü, *Türkei*, 562-72.

⁶⁴ Berктаş, *Cinema*, 147.

⁶⁵ Balan, *Transience*, 171-85.

⁶⁶ For Greece see Puchner, *Schattentheater*, 71-81; for Macedonia see Lafazanovski, Ermis. 2004. *Narativnite koreni na Makedonskiog folkloren theater*, in *Teatarot na počvata na Makedonija*, edited by Stardelov, Georgi. Skopje: Makedonska akademija na naukite i umetnostite, 47-55, 50.

⁶⁷ Papadopoulo, Alexandre. 1977. *Islamische Kunst*. Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder, 60.

⁶⁸ Arslan, *Cinema*, 30.

⁶⁹ Berктаş, *Cinema*, 147; Balan, *Transience*, 171-85.

significant. Belgrade had 19,000 inhabitants in 1846 and approximately 100,000 on the eve of WWI; compared to that, the largest city in the region, Bucharest, had 58,800 inhabitants already in 1831, 122,000 in 1859 and 381,300 in 1916. Table 1 demonstrates that the share of rural population was significantly higher than the urban share. We have to have in mind that cinema until WWI was an almost exclusively urban phenomenon. From the figures in the table we can therefore conclude that approximately 80 per cent of the population had no permanent contact with cinema.

Table 1: Urban and rural population in European comparison (approximately 1900) in per cent⁷⁰

	urban	rural
Serbia 1900	14.1	85.9
Greece 1897	33.1	66.9
Bulgaria 1900	19.8	80.2
Rumania 1889/90	17.6	82.4
Finland 1900	10.9	89.1
England/Wales 1901	77.0	23.0
France 1901	41.0	59.0
Spain 1900	32.2	67.8
Switzerland 1900	22.0	78.0
Germany 1900	56.1	43.9
Hungary 1900	30.6	69.4

Source: author

In provincial urban contexts, we can also not assume that cinema going was a mass phenomenon. This might well have been the case in the capitals. Contemporary reports document that a significant portion of Belgrade's population was destitute. Around 1900, a bricklayer earned 4.31 and a peon 2.25 dinar on average per day. The peon could buy for that admittedly 4 litres of wine or 3 kilograms of pork meat,⁷¹ but he had also to pay 18 dinar rent for his bedsit (for an apartment substantially more)⁷² and to provide for his family, on the one hand. On the other hand, a cinema ticket was relatively cheap compared to other entertainment. The fee was for mobile cinemas between 20 para (for children and soldiers) and 1 dinar (for normal adults). The permanent cinemas could be divided into two groups: the expensive ones, which charged 1 dinar or more for a ticket, and the cheap ones with tickets costing less than 1 dinar. The latter were located in less developed districts and oriented ticket fees towards the capacities of the working class such as the cinema in the Socialist People's House which charged no more than 50 para for an evening ticket and 30 para during the day. The expensive cinemas could charge 2 dinars for a box seat. Theatre tickets were in the range from 50 para to 3 dinar and concert tickets between 50 para and 8 dinar. "Belgrade's Workers' Association" charged a 1.5 dinar entrance fee for its concerts.⁷³ We can cautiously conclude that the cheaper cinemas acted as a "theatre for the poor" since even a peon with his salary could theoretically buy in the Socialist People's House five tickets for evening screenings and eight tickets for screenings during the day and the bricklayer even fourteen on a daily basis.

⁷⁰ Sundhaussen, Holm. 1989. *Historische Statistik Serbiens 1834-1914*. Munich: Oldenbourg, 102.

⁷¹ Sundhaussen, *Statistik*, 404-13.

⁷² Mišković, *Basare*, 304-5.

⁷³ Slijepčević, *Kinematografija*, 76-79.

The spectatorship of the expensive cinemas consisted probably primarily of people of the civil professions as well as the civil and military service. The civil professions the state most urgently needed were the legal profession as well as teachers, medical doctors and technicians. The close interconnectedness with state building provided these professions a pronounced character of underpinning the state, which was prolonged after the consolidation of the state. The state constituted an indispensable market for civil professions. Even architects, engineers, or pharmacists were predominantly civil servants. What the modernizing aspect is concerned, members of the free professions were relevant, since they constituted an independent societal group which defined new styles of modern life and fashion as well as contemporary tastes in the city. Lawyers, judges, medical doctors, engineers and architects all belonged to this group.⁷⁴

Serbia's population consisted of 2.9 million people in 1910. I assume that not more than 5 per cent of, let's say 150,000 people, were potential cinemagoers. It was indeed a small group concentrated in the cities which frequented the *cinema balkanica* in its early period. Cinema halls and spectatorship is one component, film production another one. Did a film industry exist in the Balkans?

Film Industry

From approximately 1907 in several European countries a proper film industry came into being. Before WWI European film industries dominated the international market: France, Italy and Denmark. 60 to 70 per cent of the films, which were exported to the USA and to European countries, were French by origin. Until WWI the French production and distribution company Pathé dominated cinema. Caused by the limited internal market Pathé found itself constrained to aggressive expansion and dominated even the US-American market.⁷⁵

The ascent of Pathé to becoming the market leader in the international cinema business cannot be explained satisfyingly in a few words. Originally a small firm that had sold photographic equipment and top hats banked on innovation and massive investments into the operative segment of its production centres after it had begun to produce films (1901-1902). Close to the city of Vincennes near Paris, a labyrinth of factories for the production, perforation, editing, printing and snipping of the footage (including the intertitle - an invention of Pathé in 1902). Beyond that, the company began to develop a marketable projector and a studio camera. In 1904, two additional studios were founded and by 1907 branches all over the world were established, which had the task to stimulate first the market and afterwards to satisfy it.

⁷⁴ Höpken, Wolfgang. 1998. *Zwischen Bürokratie und Bürgertum: ‚Bürgerliche Berufe‘ in Südosteuropa*, in *Eliten in Südosteuropa. Rolle, Kontinuitäten, Brüche in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, edited by Höpken, Wolfgang and Holm Sundhaussen. Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 69-104, 73-79.

⁷⁵ Pearson, Roberta. 1998. *Das Kino des Übergangs*, in *Geschichte des internationalen Films*, edited by Nowell-Smith, Geoffrey. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 25-42, 25-30.

For the Balkan market initially the Budapest branch (founded 1907) was concerned⁷⁶ and as already mentioned since 1911 the branch in Belgrade.

A significant part of Pathé's expansion strategy was its system of film distribution. Since July 1907 films were no longer sold but distributed as parts of weekly programs. In other words, Pathé introduced an early form of block booking in order to exploit a new source of earnings. Beside production and distribution, the production of equipment became an additional industrial pillar. Pathé studio cameras and projectors became standard equipment in film studios and cinemas worldwide. From 1909 to 1910 the company sold approximately six thousand cameras and projectors. Its worldwide distribution system channelled three to four hundred copies of its weekly film and newsreel blocks since 1909; they were watched by approximately five hundred million people worldwide. Where the Balkans is concerned, Pathé, for instance, distributed 462 films to Romania in 1913.⁷⁷

Since none of the equipment necessary for film production and screening could be produced in the Balkan countries, the emerging cinema business was dependent on the know-how as well as from the equipment and the films of Pathé (or other western companies). Therefore and because of the high investment costs, there cannot be talk of a film industry in its own right in the Balkan countries. Courageous individual initiatives were able to produce short films or even feature films, but in the international cinema business the Balkans could not play any significant role. This was also the case with the Manaki Bros., who are lauded as the film pioneers of the Balkans.

Milton (1882-1964) and Janaki⁷⁸ (1878-1954) Manaki, photographers, filmmakers and cinema owners (1921-1939) in Bitola (a city in today's Macedonia), were born in the Aromanian village of Avdela near Grevena (today in Northern Greece, until 1912 part of the Ottoman Empire) and left approximately 18,500 photographs (glass plates, films and roll films) and approximately forty films.⁷⁹ Most of their films were of an ethnographic nature and were produced between 1907 and 1911. Milton was the filmmaker of the two brothers. The films were edited in Vienna; transport was provided by the courier of the Austro-Hungarian consulate in Bitola. Of the early local cameramen in the Balkans, Milton was not the first, but in any case the most productive one.⁸⁰

In the year before Milton started filming, in Athens several strips about the Olympic Games, probably made by local cameramen, were produced. The beginnings of the local non-fictional documentary go back to the year 1897, when the Bucharestian Paul Menu (1876-1973), an optician and photographer

⁷⁶ Abel, Richard. 1993. In the Belly of the Beast: the Early Years of Pathé-Frères. *Film History* 5, 364-68.

⁷⁷ Abel, *Belly*, 368-76.

⁷⁸ This is the Macedonian spelling; the Greek is Miltos and Yannakis, the Turkish Milton and Yanaki, and the (original) Aromanian Milton and Inachia Manachia: Arslan, *Cinema*, 33.

⁷⁹ Detailed biographies see Țuțui, Marian. 2009. *A History of Romanian Cinema - O istorie a filmului românesc*. Bucharest: National Center of Cinema.

⁸⁰ Țuțui, *History*, 4-38, 62-63.

of French origin, filmed *the royal parade on 10 May 1897* and 16 more events.⁸¹ After that he stopped shooting; the reason for his decision is unknown. His camera was purchased by the neurologist Dr. Gheorghe Marinescu (1863-1938). Together with his cameraman Constantin M. Popescu he produced a series of scientific films, including among others the film *Walking problems caused by organic hemiplegia*.⁸²

In the early phase of film production, cameramen played a central role because production was based on simple means, which did not yet demand labour division. Usually, a film producer hired a cameraman - who usually was a foreigner and working for Pathé. The few local cameramen usually were trained photographers such as the first Bulgarian cameramen Vladimir Petkov and Hristofor Arnaudov.⁸³

The importance of foreign cameramen for national film productions can be best exemplified by the German-Hungarian Pathé cameraman Joseph Hepp (1887-1968). He was sent by his Hungarian company to Greece in order to install technical equipment for a new cinematograph. He remained in the country and became the dominant figure in Greek's (weakly developed) film business.⁸⁴

Appraisals calculate that approximately 2,000 European feature films had been produced by 1914.⁸⁵ The Balkan countries were able to contribute less than a dozen. The Serbian production *Life and deeds of the immortal leader Karadjordje* (1911)⁸⁶ is considered the first feature film in Serbia and in the Balkans. Its director was the well-known actor of Belgrade's National Theatre Čiča Stanojević (1859-1930), who included the most important actors of his theatre.⁸⁷ In Romania, feature film production also began in 1911 with the melodrama *Fatale Love*, produced by Pathé. The Romanian production company Art film Leon Popescu⁸⁸ shot the film *Independent Romania* (1912) - an epic representation of the war against the Ottoman Empire (1877). This movie became one of the first classics of *cinema balkanica* because of its excellent quality and its high attendance.⁸⁹ The first Greek production company, Athene Film, produced the first Greek feature film *Golpho* 1914 - a

⁸¹ The managers of Bucharest's newspaper *L'Indépendance Roumaine* purchased a Lumière camera in Lyon and committed it to the young photographer.

⁸² Tuțui, *History*, 2-8; Cernat, Manuela. 1982. *A Concise History of the Romanian Film*. Bucharest: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 7-11.

⁸³ Holloway, Ronald. 1986. *The Bulgarian Cinema*. London, Toronto: Associated University Presses, 76.

⁸⁴ Karalis, *Cinema*, 7-8; Psoma, Elene. 2008. *Filmland Griechenland - Terra incognita: Griechische Filmgeschichte zwischen Politik, Gesellschaft und internationalen Impulsen*. Berlin: Logos-Verlag, 12.

⁸⁵ Salt, Barry. 2002. *Der frühe deutsche Film: Stilmerkmale im internationalen Vergleich*, in *Kino der Kaiserzeit: Zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, edited by Elsaesser, Thomas and Michael Wedel. Munich: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 322.

⁸⁶ Its producer was the owner of the cinema *Pariz*, Svetozar Botorić; Jules Berrie of Pathé acted as cameraman: Toeplitz, Jerzy. 1992. *Geschichte des Films, Band 4 1939-1945*. Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 301.

⁸⁷ Jovičić, *Kinematografija*, 25-26.

⁸⁸ Leon Popescu (1864-1918) - vRomanian industrialist and patron of art.

⁸⁹ Tuțui, *History*, 12.

feature-length 1,700 meter and 79 minute-long strip, which had its premiere on 12. January 1914 in the Athens's movie theatre *Pantheon*.⁹⁰

All this data let us conclude that the contribution of the Balkan countries to Europe's film production was rather insignificant. The most important reasons for that were their low level of economic development compared to western European states with low capital investment capacities and a low population concentration in cities. Low consumption and low production depended on each other.

Conclusion

The fact that cinema was a western development, which met traditional visual cultures in the Balkans relatively unprepared, can be deduced firstly by the observation that the mobile cinema was almost exclusively operated by travelling foreigners from Central Europe, Italy and France. Secondly, the technical equipment for screenings in permanent cinemas in the period of consideration (until the outbreak of the First Balkan War in autumn 1912) had to be imported from foreign countries - as well as film cameras, cameramen and projectionists. These actors had to react to the possibilities, chances and opportunities on the ground, but also to limitations of the implementability of their ideas. Insofar, we can speak of amalgamation processes.

With regard to the Muslim regions and countries, it can be stated that the introduction of cinema was confronted alongside weak economic development by cultural and religious obstacles, which is, for instance, reflected by the fact that there were no permanent cinemas in Kosovo or Albania and only a few in Istanbul, the viewers of which consisted of non-Muslims or members of the European-oriented Muslim elite. The relatively high number of cinemas with a surprisingly high number of seats in the Muslim shaped city of Sarajevo can be explained by the presence of a substantial number of civil and military servants from Christian parts of the Habsburg Monarchy.

What the relationship between western film production companies and western visual modernity to the Ottoman Empire is concerned, the years until its breakdown were too few, the time too turbulent and the Muslim attendance too low to negotiate such a relationship. However, such processes of negotiations and amalgamations were permanently on the agenda of the newly founded Republic of Turkey (1923) because Hollywood and the Turkish-Muslim perceptions of an acceptable visual culture were hardly possible to bring in line. The reactions of the Jewish communities, which, except Reform Judaism, were also very sceptical towards photography and film, could not be discussed in this essay because no research has been conducted on that so far.

In the period of consideration, the cinema business was concentrated primarily in the capital cities, which in various densities were covered by a cinematographic infrastructure overshadowed by a comparatively low economic development. The cinema owners in capitals with a primarily Muslim population were overwhelmingly non-Muslim; in capitals with an Orthodox

⁹⁰ Psoma, *Filmiland*, 36-43.

majority the owners were Christians. Using the example of Belgrade, I could show that although the city did not reflect “western” industrial capitalistic modernity, it nevertheless started to show signs of western modernity before the establishment of permanent cinemas. In the two decades before the onset of WWI, Serbia’s capital was under permanent reconstruction and undergoing a comprehensive process of modernization, which included the institutionalization of western visual modernity. Theatres, varieties, orpheums, circuses and photoplasticons prepared the population for visual adventures already before the first permanent cinemas were established. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that, when looking at Serbia as a whole, only an insignificant proportion of the population had visited a cinema screening.

An additional result of this little research is that from the very beginning, *cinema balkanica* would not grow into a film industry. For its competitive establishment, it would have needed enormous investment which could not be mobilized and would not have paid off in a primarily non-industrial, agricultural context. Therefore, film production remained at a very low level, the consequence of which was that the film repertoire was based on the import of primarily French, Italian and Dutch productions. On the whole, however, cinema in the Balkans, as in the rest of the world, was under the banner of Pathé.

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